

Leadership for All:

An investigation into the benefits of student leadership in secondary schools

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Abstract

“Leadership is not something you do to people. It’s something you do with them”
Ken Blanchard (2003)

Background: Student leadership in schools is traditionally modelled on an outdated ideology of leadership. The traditional model consists of a group of selected prefects, who are given leadership responsibility, allowed privileges, and are tasked with representing the student body. Contemporary views of leadership are relationship based, collaborative and distributed rather than hierarchical. **Purpose:** This research focuses on the experiences of designated student leaders and non-designated students. It explores the benefits, the challenges, and the degree to which the student’s value school leadership experience. **Methodology:** Through interviews and observations, past students, current students, and staff at a case study school share their experiences and opinions about student leadership. The data is presented in two ways; using common themes and as three composite narratives. These stories give insight into the lives of the students through their eyes. **Findings / Conclusion:** The data shows that student leadership is an empowering and valuable educational experience, one which should be available to all senior students. The school’s approach to student leadership; through its ideology, structure, and support, dictates its effectiveness. **Implications:** A model for student leadership, based on the findings of the research, is presented. The model is structured around an ideology that views student leadership as a supported learning opportunity for all senior students who choose to be involved.

Chapter 1 : Introduction

1.1 About the research

This study aims to examine, from the point of view of the students, the effectiveness of student leadership experiences. The concept of student leadership fits well with the views of progressive educationalists and those, like myself, who believe that authentic experiences are the most valuable for learning. The change in societies understanding of leadership is a key aspect of this research. Schools, in most part, have not evolved their student leadership programmes in line with changes in our understanding of leadership. This in turn limits the effectiveness of student leadership. This study focuses on how we, as educators, can increase the effectiveness of student development through these leadership experiences. The investigation identifies the benefits and tensions around student leadership then suggests a model that brings student leadership into line with contemporary views around leadership.

1.2 Why student leadership?

The past decade has seen significant research in the area of student voice and leadership (Ryan 2006; Mitra 2005; McGregor 2007; Rudduck & Fielding 2006; Dempster & Lazzio 2007; Davis 2011; Lilley 2010; Boettcher & Gansemer-Topf 2015; Anderson 2016; McNae 2011; Hine & Lavery 2012). I believe this interest has been driven through three main changes in society. The change in our understanding of leadership (Fertman & van Linden 1999; Dimmock 2012), increased focus on school improvement through leadership (Mitra 2005; Frost & Roberts 2011; McNae 2011), and the recognition of student voice through the ideology around democratic and inclusive education (Ruddock 2005; Lodge 2008). Lodge & Reed (2006) reflect my belief

through identifying three recent phases of school improvement. In the 80's and early 90's, the focus was on school organisation and processes; by the early '90s, the focus turned to teacher development; finally, the currently phase where the focus is on the need for learners to be involved in their learning. This phase arose in the latter part of the 2000's and continues today.

It is in this context that an increasing amount of attention has been given to student leadership and voice. Lodge & Reed (2006) studying schools in the United Kingdom, state "evidence suggests that involving students in dialogue about their own learning helps young people become better learners, and teachers improve their pedagogy" (p.4). A major aspect of being more involved in learning is having a voice in decisions made at the school. In the United Kingdom both the Leadership for Learning project, started in Cambridge in 2000, and the National College of School Leadership (now called National College for Teaching and Leadership) promoted the concept of student empowerment through leadership. Robert Anderson (2016) in his investigation into the changing structure of student leadership in New Zealand schools' identifies the government's focus on keeping students in school longer, as a major cause of this interest. He states "the increased retention rates in Year 13 has necessitated a rethink and rebranding of student leadership. Increasingly schools are looking to utilize the leadership potential of greater numbers of students in their final year of secondary education" (Anderson, 2016, p.5). With increasing numbers of senior students, who by default of being the oldest, generally have greater mana¹ than other students, schools should be looking to widen the opportunities for leadership. As DuBrin identifies "leadership is needed at all levels within an organisation and can be practiced to some extent even by a person not assigned to a formal leadership position" (DuBrin, 2013, p.3). Increasingly schools are giving

¹ Mana is a Maori word meaning authority, status and implies the person has influence over others.

leadership training to all its year 13 students not just those in leadership positions (Davis, 2011).

Dial (2006) in his review of student leadership literature stated “much of the available literature is quantitative in nature in that it investigates the relationship between one or more variables as they relate to leadership development programmes” (p.8). Dempster & Lizzio (2007) agree, their review of the literature around student leadership “shows that there is an identifiable gap in our knowledge of student’s understanding of leadership and how they see, experience and interpret different situations” (p.279). The concept of student leadership identity has been researched by Komives, Mainella & Longerbeam (2006), they created a model to help educators facilitate student leadership identity development, however, the model was developed to support adults developing the students, not as a guide for students. Archard (2012) investigated student leadership development as reported by staff at single sex girls schools in NZ and Australia, she identifies “the importance of future research [into student leadership] will lie in understanding how the positive experiences of leadership can translate into post-school leadership opportunities” (p.42). Whilst investigating the personal benefits of student leadership this investigation provides some insight into this issue. Dempster & Lizzio (2007) suggest research into the actual experiences and “credible accounts from the inside” (p.276) of student leaders is lacking. This study will address from an ‘insider’ perspective the nature of the student leader’s experiences, thus going some way, to filling what is currently a gap in the research around student leadership. Through individual interviews I identified the structure and purpose of a school’s student leadership programme, examined the perceived beneficial components of the leadership experience, critically explored any negative aspects of the student leaders role and will suggest structures that could allow a greater number of

students access to the leadership experience.

1.3 Author's interest

My interest in this subject has developed through my experiences of teaching Outdoor Education (OE) and also being a Dean and Head of Year. As a teacher of Outdoor Education (OE) my beliefs have morphed over the past decade from an original focus on developing participant skills and enjoyment of a particular pursuit (using Unit Standards as assessments), through the education for sustainability (EfS) context of OE, to my currently held belief in the personal and social benefits of young people being involved in Outdoor Adventure activities.

This transition to what I believe purposeful outdoor education to be, evolved from four sources. Experiences in a wide range of outdoor activities within three different schools; reading relevant professional journal articles; having collegial discussion about programme challenges and successes; and my promotion into the pastoral side of education as a Dean. This move gave me a more holistic picture of the purpose of education. I posed the question; What benefit is my subject to the future of students? What are the students learning that will be useful in general life, both today, and in the future? Whilst there were many aspects of my OE course that I could justify being of use in later life, I realised that there was so much *more* that the students could be gaining from the experiences I was facilitating.

As a result of this reflection I trialled some EfS achievement standards within my OE course. Although I struggled to incorporate enough *challenging* physical activity into these units of work, it became apparent that students could rise to the expectation. The importance of challenging physical activity within my Outdoor programme stems from my personal values. Throughout

my life, both regular exercise and taking on personal challenges, have been high priorities. My experiences as a PE teacher have strengthened these values, I view encouraging students to be physical activity as an important part of my job. These values also fit with the New Zealand National Curriculum. Regular physical activity and taking risks in learning are both specified within the curriculum document (Ministry of Education, 2007). With the EfS achievement standards I found the majority of students could engage and achieve in the more theoretically based assessments. With the lack of physical activity in the EfS standards, I looked to the Physical Education curriculum for relevant standards. From there, and coinciding with a new teaching position, I redeveloped an outdoor education unit standard based course, into an outdoor leadership, achievement standard course. The programme uses outdoor pursuits to provide authentic experiences for students to critically explore theoretical concepts. Through these experiences the course develops the student's interpersonal skills. For example, there are many opportunities created for students to take a leadership role within their peer group and with younger students. Although the course covers white water kayaking, tramping, snow sports and rock climbing, it is the hours leading the Year 8 students in outdoor activities that are most valued by them as stated in the end of course review. For some it is the most challenging experience they will have all year, for others it provides an awareness of the intrinsic satisfaction resulting from leadership.

As a Year 12 & 13 Dean I see the enormous capacity many students have for leading their peers. I watch those lucky enough to be designated school leaders thrive and develop in confidence throughout the year but also struggle with personal and group challenges. Opportunities for public speaking, organising events, involvement in meetings, representation of the school, extra tutorship, recognition, to name just a few are served up on a regular basis.

The potential personal development associated with the leadership experience makes me agree with Early & Weindling (2004) when they write, “there are many leaders, not just one. Leadership is distributed. It resides not solely in the individual at the top, but in every person at every level who, in one way or another, acts as a leader to a group of followers – wherever in the organisation that person is, whether shop steward, team head or CEO” (p.15). Thus emerged the title of this study; Leadership for All.

1.4 Research Questions

The key question for this research is;

How can the benefits of student leadership be offered to all senior students?

Supporting questions;

According to the students, what are the benefits of student leadership to the individual, and the school?

How can the roles of student leaders be made more effective?

Do student leaders value the experiences?

Outcome

The study will aim to design a model for supporting a diverse range of authentic student leadership opportunities in a high school.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study; it outlines the background and rationale for the thesis.

Chapter 2 is the literature review, which outlines issues and key research in the areas of; the nature of leadership, educational leadership and student leadership. It explains and discusses the concepts of distributed and collegial approaches to leadership as these methods are the basis on which contemporary student leadership is modelled. The gaps in the literature are identified and this study's contribution to the field highlighted.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology used in this study. It justifies the research design, focusing on a naturalistic, qualitative paradigm. This chapter also describes and justifies the data collection methods of interviews and observation. It discusses the ethical considerations involved with the study, particularly important as the research heavily focuses on the experiences and opinions of adolescent school students. Finally this chapter describes the case study school, its current student leadership and management structures.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the investigation. The data is presented under four themes identified by the researcher;

- Responsibility and expectations of student leaders
- Impact on School and Community of student leadership
- Personal Development and Challenges of student leadership
- Strategies for the development of student leadership

Student quotes, field observations and general findings are reported for each theme. The second part of chapter 4, the composite narratives, is an attempt to give the reader three stories from which to get a feel for the experiences of student leaders. They were derived from the experiences of both students holding, and not holding, formal positions of leadership. The intent is to give the adult reader a sense of how adolescents experience their final year at school within the context of leadership.

Chapter 5 is a discussion split into two key areas. Initially the benefits that students gain from leadership will be examined and the findings of this study compared to others. Secondly tensions that accompany the student leadership role will be discussed.

Chapter 6 identifies the implications of the study. It recommends an ideology, based on evidence, around which the school can formulate an effective structure for student leadership. This section also draws on suggestions made by the students during their interviews for the enhancement of student leadership experiences. A model is put forward by the author which gives a platform for many of the implications to be addressed.

Chapter 7 provides a concluding summary of the study. Limitations are discussed and suggestions for further research are given.

Chapter 2 : Literature Review

2.1 Main literature sources

The literature review for this proposal was undertaken using the University of Canterbury (UC) library resources and general searches on the internet. UC has access to a vast array of journals, databases and online documents as well as books. The initial review looks at the nature of leadership in general, focuses specifically on the contemporary views around leadership. Secondly educational leadership is considered. This is the structure within which student leadership lies and as such is an important factor in shaping the student's experience of leadership. The main focus in this vast topic is on collegial and distributed frameworks for school leadership. These are selected initially because they are the predominant systems in place at the case study school, as described by the principal, but also due to their ideology enabling authentic student leadership experiences. The literature on student leadership is then reviewed with the focus initially on how student leadership is undergoing change, before discussing the educational or learning argument in support of students having leadership experiences. Research follows, around the support and guidance of student leaders, highlighting the inherent student centred, and self discovery pedagogies. Finally in this section I address the issue of tokenism in student leadership.

2.2 What is Leadership?

Leadership means different things to different people around the world, it is situational and context dependent. The nature of leadership is difficult to define, at the simplistic level

leadership can be the action of leading a group of people or an organisation. Northouse (2007) describes leadership as a process in which an individual influences a group to achieve a common goal. The term 'influence' has become commonly used when discussing leadership. For example, Ken Blanchard wrote, "The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority" (p.ii) while Michael Hyatt says, "Aspiring leaders would do well to stop focusing on control and figure out how to expand their influence" and John Maxwell puts it simply as "Leadership is influence". Through the focus on influence we acknowledge that leadership, although often given, can also be covert. Many people exert enormous influence without ever having held a position of authority, such as Vincent Van Gogh, Mother Teresa, Mahatma Gandhi. This concept holds true in our schools. From my experiences many of the most effective student leaders are those who use their influence, rather than title, to get tasks complete. Osborn, Hunt and Jauch (2002) emphasise the contextual nature of leadership and state, "Leadership is embedded in context. It is socially constructed in, and from, a context where patterns over time must be considered and where history matters" (p.789). Harris (2003) supports this view suggesting that leadership has differing meanings to different people due to their own personal frame of reference. McNae (2011) links this idea to student leadership by identifying the school as an essential component in the study of student leadership. McNae argues that this is because the school has predominantly been the biggest influencer in the student's leadership development.

With a multitude of principles, styles, methods and strategies, our understanding of leadership has developed considerably over the past century. From the Great Man theories (Carlyle 1841), based on the assumption that leadership was an innate disposition and leaders were born as such. Through to the plethora of contemporary theories, which generally view

leadership as an attitude or behaviour (Gronn, 2003), leadership changes with the social and political climate of the time. It is not the intention of this study to discuss the evolution of leadership theory; however, many schools still operate on a student leadership system developed back in the 16th century (Lilly, 2010). Despite the difficulty in defining leadership, the specifics of good leadership have been researched in depth. A good leader inspires, motivates and directs their followers to achieve a goal (Posner, 2009). Posner developed this statement into 5 dimensions; “modelling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act and encouraging the heart” (p.554). This description highlights the all encompassing nature of leadership. Naylor (cited in Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2015) states, “effective leadership is a product of the heart and an effective leader must be visionary, passionate, creative, flexible, inspiring, innovative, courageous, imaginative, experimental and initiate change” (p.6). Steve Jobs went so far as to famously state “Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower” (Cited in Gallo 2010). The expectations on a leader have certainly diversified since the days of the inspirational hero who was blessed with personal charisma, intelligence, wisdom, or political skill.

Recent writing suggests that the leadership qualities most valued by society include collaboration, ethical practices, moral outcomes, credibility and authenticity (Komives et al, 2006). The focus on people rather than process and the partnership of management and leadership skills has focused attention on the interpersonal, relationship aspect of Leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Komives, Lucas & McMahon, (1998) used the term “relational leadership” to describe this approach to leadership. They asserted “leadership is a relational process of people working together to accomplish change or to make a difference that will benefit the common good” (p.ix). Komives et al. (1998) asserted that relational leadership

comprised five key elements; purposeful, process-oriented, inclusive, empowering, and ethical. Gronn (2003) identifies the growth in leadership teams in all aspects of society, although he states that little research has been done into their effectiveness. As shall be highlighted later, research suggests that it is this notion of shared leadership that young people value.

2.3 Educational leadership

In this section the literature around school leadership will be discussed. Reviewing this literature will give a clearer picture of the context within which the student leaders are located.

Given the previous discussion on the power of influence within leadership it is perhaps obvious that educational leadership is concerned with influencing the school community in a way that enables it to achieve its goals. These goals increasingly come in the form of a vision derived from a set of explicit values. Bush (2011) states, “leaders are expected to ground their actions in clear personal and professional values” (p.6). Lambert (2003) expands on this by focussing on the creation of the vision, and she promotes the idea of a shared vision as opposed to a principal’s stand alone vision. Lambert argues that participant involvement in the creation of the vision ensures commitment to its success rather than a principal having to gain ‘buy in’ from their staff for their own vision to be achieved. The style of leadership may derive from the vision and values that the school espouses. The level of participation in leadership that the principal encourages will have a major influence on the structure and concept of leadership within the organisation. Bush (2011) identified six models of management in education and eight of leadership. The table below links the two.

Management Model	Leadership Model
Formal	Managerial
Collegial	Participative Transformational Distributed
Political	Transactional
Subjective	Postmodern Emotional
Ambiguity	Contingency
Cultural	Moral Instructional

(Bush, 2011, p. 36)

For the purposes of this study on student leadership the literature around collegial management and distributed leadership will be explored. The reasons for this are twofold, firstly student leadership relates closely with both these concepts and secondly the main style of leadership used in the case study school, intends to be collegial and distributed. The styles of management and leadership that Bush (2011) calls formal / managerial allow for little, if any, authentic student leadership. The hierarchical nature of a school based on these models would disenfranchise student leaders. The top down approach leaves the lowly student leader without influence and a restricted mandate to just enforce the principal's vision, thus

maintaining the status quo. As will be discussed later, it was within this type of leadership regime that student leadership developed. In some schools the expectations of the student leader role has struggled to evolve beyond this structure.

Collegial management and leadership styles are based on shared decision making within an organisation. Bush (2011) identifies collegial management as when “organisations determine policy and make decisions through a process of discussion leading to consensus” (p.72). He goes on to suggest that in practice, organisations fall on a continuum from ‘restricted’ through to ‘pure’ collegial management: the principal sharing decision making with a few senior colleagues as opposed to every member of the school being involved in the decision. Yukl (1998) identifies the major strength of collegial models of management when stating “shared leadership not only involves leadership behaviours that build willing followers who commit themselves to the organization’s objectives, but it also empowers followers to accomplish these objectives by their becoming leaders in their own fields of expertise” (p.324). The student leaders are selected due to their expertise as students, thus they are an integral component in a collegial leadership system. Collegial management as with collaborative or democratic leadership, aims to gain consensus amongst the school community or a representative subgroup within it. The principal's role is to create the conditions and culture whereby decisions come from within the organisation rather than fed down from the top. “In such a setting, staff, learners, parents, and other stakeholders would function together using democratic principles to improve the school and enhance the quality of instruction and learning” (Singh, Manser & Mestry, 2007, p.542).

The collegial approach has been criticised by some authors due to its idealistic nature. Brown,

Boyle & Boyle (cited in Bush 2011) point out that, in many schools, although collegial or collaborative methods were promoted, few were genuine once viewed in depth. The issues that arise in collegial management are reflected in the issues and struggles that student leaders face. With regard to responsibility and accountability, collegial models assume that all members of an organisation are willing to take responsibility and accountability for the decisions they are involved in. "Emancipation does not mean that teachers are given unconditional freedom, rather it includes the assumption of responsibility and commitment to the school's shared and chosen direction" (Singh, 2005, p.14). In reality, the difficulties getting teachers, students and parents to take responsibility and thus be accountable, is often harder than the theory suggests. In my experience many teachers are reluctant to go beyond their classroom in terms of their accountability. Parents, especially at secondary school level, often lack connection with the school and thus are not keen to be on committees and working groups and students can be so focussed on their personal achievements that they exclude themselves from any wider school role. Singh (2005) goes on to identify a major flaw with the implementation of collegial practice in the achievability of shared vision and values. He states "the absence of collective attitudes and virtues and hence, the absence of a meaningful shared vision could be the reasons for some schools having an apparent lack of direction and commitment" (p.11). Collegial management is a bottom up processes but schools, under the direct control of government via curriculum and finance, are affected by top down regulations. Conflict over the goals of the institution being partially imposed by government can also be detrimental to its success.

A different approach, distributed leadership "involves mortals as well as heroes, it involves the many and not just the few. It is about leadership practice, not simply roles and positions. And

leadership practice is about interactions, not just the actions of heros” (Spillane, 2006, p.4). This description highlights the 21st century concept of leadership because it creates an important and valid place for all members of an organisation to have influence and be valued. Kouzes and Posner (1997, p.xx) agree stating “leadership is not the private reserve of a few charismatic men and women. It is a process ordinary people use when they are bringing forth the best from themselves and others. Liberate the leader in everyone, and extraordinary things happen.” Distributed leadership has a focus both on shared leadership, what Spillane (2006) calls ‘leadership plus’ where many members of an organisation take on some form of leadership but also on leadership practice. The non-specific nature of distributed leadership is highlighted by Harris (2008) when she points out “if leadership equates with influence then inevitably all leadership is distributed” (p.33). The practice of distributed leadership however, refers to how leaders interact with their followers, and how the followers influence the leader. Duignan and Bhindi (1997) argued this same point by stating “the quality of relationships greatly influences everything else that happens in organisations, including the quality of leadership” (p.201). The general structure of new Zealand schools fits well with the ideology around distributed leadership. Having individual subject faculties, pastoral year level teams, cross curricular committees, student leadership, a board of trustees, and a senior leadership team provides many people with leadership input. These groups, other than the senior leadership team are generally not hierarchical and are most often small. Focussing on the aforementioned shared leadership through positive relationships can allow all staff, students and parents to be engaged with the leadership decisions and thus direction of their school.

In England the National College for School leadership (NCSL, 2006), an influential body who promote the concept of distributed leadership, identified five key pillars in schools that

successfully use distributed leadership:

1. Self-confident and self-effacing headship
2. Clarity of structure and accountability
3. Investment in leadership capability
4. A culture of trust
5. A turning point, something that leads to momentum towards the evolution of distributed leadership (NCSL, 2006, p.22).

As with collegial management, writers have questioned the use of distributed leadership in schools due to the need to comply with, and act in accordance with, nationally ordained policies. Hall (2013) when reflecting on what he terms the 'strangeness' of distributed leadership, states "on the one hand [distributed leadership is] a discursive intervention that those working within schools, not least designated senior leaders, found very difficult to resist, on the other the requirement to perform according to a predetermined and closely controlled set of requirements" (p.485). Duignan & Bezzina (2006) identify the challenge of distributed leadership to be "finding ways of encouraging more teachers to become actively engaged in the leadership of their school" (p.10). Both of these challenges around distributed leadership are related to changing the culture of a school. Harris (2002) finds that this change in culture as a major obstacle, she states "It would be naïve to assume that the structural, cultural and micro-political barriers operating in schools would simply fall away to accommodate and support distributed leadership" (p.12). In her research, Cartwright (2005) also focussed on the culture of an organisation. Working with peer support programmes in the UK, writes that student leadership is about culture, it is "about trust and taking a risks by sharing or delegating

power with young people” (p.50). This view is echoed by Dempster & Lazzio (2007) who found that students are not interested in the heroic models of leadership but rather the leaders who work with the student body from a distance. These views correlate closely with both distributed leadership and collegial styles of management.

2.4 Student leadership

As stated above young people tend to have very contemporary views of leadership. Roach et al (1999) found that students identified more closely with doing leadership rather than being a leader. They state “self knowledge and commitment to relationships that sustain group goals, along with skills necessary for constant collection and assessment of information, stand as dominant in youth leadership” (p.21). There is an clear link between the terminology used in describing Distributed and Collegial leadership and the expectations on leaders of young people. The students interviewed in this study concurred with Roach et al (1999) definition of leadership. They were generally keen on group approaches and shared visions rather than striving for individual power. The concept of empowerment of a whole group and sharing leadership, key features of distributed leadership, relates to students understanding around the nature of leadership and thus provides justification for increased focus on these styles of leadership across a school.

Student leadership in secondary schools has been around for many years. The traditional model, still practiced by many New Zealand schools, of a selection of elite student prefects being led by a Head Boy and Girl came from the English Public school system. Dr Thomas Arnold from Eton school in the UK developed the Prefect system into what is now commonly

used in schools around the commonwealth. This system for student leadership generally comprises of a Head Boy and Girl who oversee a group of students given special responsibilities and privileges. The specific role of the prefect varies little between schools, liaising with the Principal or Senior Leadership team, representing the school in community events, representing the student body at assemblies, being a role model student in terms of uniform, academic effort, sporting or cultural involvement and attending weekly prefect meetings. Increasingly schools are using prefects in behavioural issues, for example using prefects to speak on behalf of the student body at restorative conferences. In reflecting on Arnold's system, Curtis & Boulton (1964) warn that the prefects need to be used effectively. When not used effectively the "prefects have been regarded as a kind of police force of the Headmaster and staff the system has failed miserably" (p. 66). This observation still holds true today, examples of prefects being charged with maintaining order in the corridors during non-class times are not hard to find. Hine & Lavery (2012) suggest "the principal is pivotal in the development of student leadership within schools" (p.1). Whether through a direct or indirect role principals have the responsibility and influence to ensure that student leadership does not become tokenistic or unauthentic.

The changes in the theoretical concept of leadership discussed above, combined with worldwide focus on children's rights (United Nations Rights of a child convention, 1989) led to UNICEF declaring "students [have a] right to speak and be listened to" (UNICEF, 1990, p.1). As a response to this the New Zealand government, through the Ministry of Education, required a student to be on the Board of Trustees for each school.

When considering the purpose of education, student leadership would seem to correlate more

closely with progressive rather than traditional views. Whilst the traditionalists argue that rote learning, testing and even coercion are best for young people, progressive educationalists promote the individual, child centred approach to learning with experience and problem solving at its heart. Modern school improvement is increasingly focussing on developing the learner rather than the structure or teacher around the learner (Lodge & Reed 2006). Aiming to increase the opportunities for the develop of leadership capacity in students reflects this progressive approach. It affords opportunity for the student to have authentic experiences, use problem solving skills and uses the teacher as guide or facilitator rather than distributor of knowledge. It is important therefore that teachers are aware of their role in students leadership development. It is, as shall be discussed later, the responsibility of all staff to provide opportunity and feedback for students to develop their leadership skills.

The educational argument in support of valuing student leadership revolves around New Zealand Curriculum (2007) stated vision that education should be about developing “young people to be confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners” (p.6). The traditional view of education, the acquisition of knowledge through rote learning of facts and reading books and maintaining the status quo, no longer fits with the demands of modern society. The Oxford dictionary word of the year 2016, “post-truth” describes a situation “in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief” (The Guardian live, 2017). This in itself demonstrates that students living in modern society need to be emotionally aware critical thinkers, confident to created and voice their own personal opinions.

The concept of learning through leadership experiences associates closely with the ideas

proposed back in the early 20th Century by John Dewey. Dewey (1944) argued that the link between experience and learning should be a critical aspect of education. Progressive education, as it was named, encouraged an individualised approach to learning rather than passive absorption of information. Dewey believed in hands-on approach to learning, “an ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory because it is only in experience that any theory has vital and verifiable significance” (Dewey, 1944, p.144). Student leadership is certainly a hands-on role which allows students the opportunity to verify the theories associated with leadership. If our educational aim is to develop within our students “the attitudes and dispositions necessary to the continuous and progressive life of a society ... through the intermediary of the environment” (Dewey, 1944, p.26), then students taking leadership opportunities goes a considerable way to addressing this aim. Shields (2011) states “schooling should have major impacts not only on the enhancement of knowing and understanding, but also on the enhancement of character: intellectual character, moral character, civic character, and performance character” (p.48). The opportunities that leadership provides fulfils all of these requirements. Hattie (2009) in his book *Visible Learning*, identifies critical evaluation skills as the important purpose of education. He suggests that students are taught to be critical whilst “respecting self and others; having concern for one’s own and others’ life and well-being; and the ability to imagine and think about what is ‘good’ for self and others” (Hattie, 2009, p.4). The close relationship between leadership qualities and what is valued in education continues with the New Zealand curriculum. It identifies five key competencies; thinking; using language, symbols, and texts; managing self; relating to others; and participating and contributing. All five of these “capabilities for living and lifelong learning” (NZ Curriculum, 2007, p.12) are ideally utilised during a student’s leadership experience.

Apart from a leadership conference or camp, the training and guidance of student leaders generally comes down to the staff at a school. Most commonly, a member of the senior leadership team works alongside the prefects, supporting, coaching and guiding them to varying degrees. Hine (2013), Johnson (2005) and Lavery (2006) all stress the importance of staff support for student leaders. Levey goes as far as to say “if there is one reason student leadership fails, it is due largely to [a] lack of staff backing” (p.28). It is this author’s experience that most schools view student leadership as a specific job, often with a job description to match. Freeborn (2000) sees it differently. He states “student leadership programmes provide a powerful connection to positive self-esteem, connection with the school’s history, future role models and representation of the school’s core business of student growth” (p.18). Viewing student leadership as a job or role to be performed, distracts staff from what should be the school’s real purpose, student growth. Seemiller (2016) researching the development of student leadership identified the two ways that students develop their leadership competencies. Firstly learning on the job, where leaders learn through having leadership experiences. He argues that an issue with this is that if “someone does not have an accurate sense of how to enact a competency effectively, their continued execution of it might simply reinforce bad habits” (p.64). The second method is a more intentional and developmental approach. This approach involves ongoing teaching, coaching and feedback. “Creating intentional learning environments helps students develop leadership competencies that result in their becoming the leaders aptly referenced in their institution’s mission statement” (p.64).

Fundamentally, student leaders are experiencing leadership, having a go, developing their capacity to lead. Any spin off benefits to the school are of secondary importance. In their investigation into student perspectives on leadership, Andrews & Keefe (2011) found that students “were unable to make an explicit link between student leadership and educational

gain” (p.21). With this in mind and working on the premise that student leadership is education and development of a student’s character (Fertman & van Linden 1999), reviewing the literature on learner centred education is worthwhile.

2.5 Experiential and discovery learning

Working on the assumption that they gain selection because they already have the skills needed, some schools leave it totally up to the students to discover what leadership is and how it should be done. Others take a more pragmatic view, assuming that students will need guidance and coaching in developing their leadership identity and capacity. Andrews & Keeffe (2011) state “students are looking to the school structures and organisations for affirmation and direction, yet they are unable to link their understandings of student leadership with quality learning” (p.33). Whatever the level of support student leadership has in a school, it is by its very nature, experiential learning.

The learning and development of student leaders is through experiences in the field. In his book on experiential learning Kolb (2015) defines experiential learning simply as “learning from life experience”. He continues by stating “the emphasis is on direct sense experience and in context action as the primary source of learning” (p.xviii).

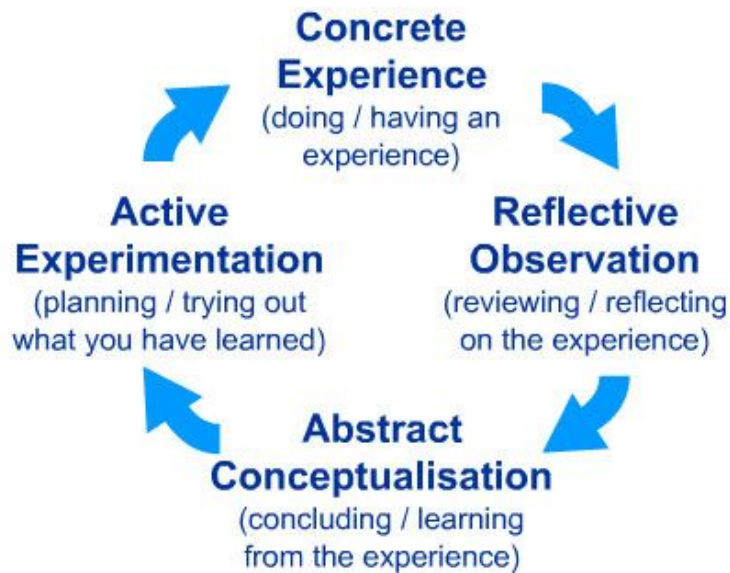


Figure 1 - The experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 2015, p.51)

The learning cycle above shows how the learner goes through the process of experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting. The argument that experiential learning ignores learning from literature or that it allows bias (Buchmann & Schwille, as cited in Kolb 2015) to creep into the students learning are valid arguments. Allowing students to experiment, encouraging them to reflect, conceptualise and refine does not always result in the most effective or indeed correct answer to a problem. I have previously trialled an approach in the teaching of physical education called “Teaching games for understanding (TGfU)” which has, as its theoretical basis, a focus on discovery and experiential learning. Having used this method with multiple groups within the context of learning the game of volleyball, no student has yet ‘discovered’ either a technically correct set or forearm pass. This anecdotal evidence suggests that without some direction from the teacher there is the risk that when a student finds what they believe to be the answer, they will cease to use the learning cycle. Their answer may fall short of what is actually achievable however, the process of thinking, experimentation and reflection allows

independence in learning. If encouraged to use external sources in their reflection (videos, coaching manuals) then there is a high probability that students will eventually discover a technically correct model. It can therefore, in some instances, be argued that relying on experiential learning can limit student development. It is my opinion that on a basic level the experiential learning cycle allows educators a structure on which to appraise their programmes, ensuring that time is given to each stage of the cycle and that students are aware of, and using each step to make the most effective use of experiences. It is, in the experience of this researcher, often the case that particular aspects of the experiential cycle are missing from student leadership experiences. Another model that students find useful when exploring their experiences is Driscoll's (1994) Model of reflection. Driscoll matched 'prompts' to the stages of the learning cycle, 'what, so what and now what'. Research has shown that often student leaders are not going through this process in any formal way (Andrews & Keeffe 2011). They are left to figure it out for themselves. There is a careful balance to be made for staff supporting the leaders. They must allow students enough freedom to have genuine leadership opportunities, whilst ensuring that they are reflecting, conceptualising and experimenting with the leadership process.

Weimer (2013) promotes student centred learning, recommending that teachers relinquish the role of content expert so they can facilitate a learning process that more directly engages the student in their own learning. Dewey also sees the role of the teacher as a guide, an adult learning alongside the pupil, helping them with the process of discovery. Mitra (2005) supports this belief through suggesting that the best role a teacher can play [for student leaders] is as a supporter, allowing for trial and minimising errors. In research with University aged students, Patalano & North (2016) investigated the student's perceptions of independent experiences in

Outdoor Education. They conclude that “students reported a greater sense of responsibility for their decisions when there was no teacher present. They felt this led to higher levels of participation in decision making and engagement with learning” (p.12). When critiquing learner centred approaches Mayer (2004) identified a limitation in the development of student leaders. Mayor stated that his “review of the relevant research literatures shows that discovery based practice is not as effective as guided discovery” (p.18).

Whilst selecting and appointing student leaders is given a considerable amount of time and thought, the ongoing guidance or coaching can often be limited at best. It is important that the staff member associated with the student leaders recognises the challenges that the students face. Hattie (2009) states “the greater the challenge the higher the probability that one seeks and needs feedback, and the more important it is that there is a teacher to ensure that the learner is on the right path to successfully meet the challenge” (p.38). Guiding the student leaders is an important aspect of their development. It should not be accidental guidance but structured and pre-planned with thought given to the level of self discovery and reflection. Lavery (2006) suggests the responsibilities of an adult mentor may vary with the needs of the students. He identifies “the capacity to listen, to explore ideas, to share experiences, to facilitate processes, to share information, to give advice (sparingly) and to provide feedback would seem to be central [skills for a mentor]” (p.28).

2.6 The risk of tokenism

Ryan (2006) argues that schools need to consider whether their student leadership roles are tokenistic or genuine. He specifies involvement in direct leadership of the school, that is; staff

meetings, staffing appointments and school boards, if student leadership is to be real. Lambert (2003, p.21) stated “a public commitment to student leadership has often been expressed through the establishment of governance opportunities. However, representation on boards and committees can be of a token nature (e.g., one or two students on a team or council), and student voices have not traditionally been a strong presence.” Avolio (1999) challenges the notion of formal leadership positions. In his study investigating how youth learn and show leadership, he found that youth could elect to show leadership in a variety of settings and social arrangements and he dismisses the idea that youth must have a formal position of leadership in order to develop leadership capabilities. It is this discussion that I believe this study can add substance to. Delving into the experiences of student leaders, exploring their perception pertaining to the value of their roles and how the experience has benefitted them. Capturing the opinions of school staff who work with the leaders and observing student leaders in action will hopefully help legitimise the argument for increased student leadership opportunities in schools.

2.7 Summary of literature review

The literature review has revealed gaps in our understanding of student leadership. Most notably the experiences and opinions of the students themselves. Much has been written about the nature of leadership and school leadership, however only a few studies have contributed to how student leadership fits within this framework. The research around student leadership is mostly from an adult perspective (Wallin, 2003; McGregor, 2007; Lavery & Hine, 2013; Dempster & Logan, 1998; Seemiller, 2016), often focussing the qualities needed by students to be effective leaders. This study with its key question, how can the benefits of

student leadership be offered to all senior students? addresses this gap in the literature. It investigates the benefits and tensions from a student perspective, using student suggestions for changing the structure and nature of their leadership.

Another gap in the literature is around the issues or tensions that students experience in a leadership role. The assumption within many studies is that student leadership is a beneficial phenomenon with many authors calling for greater levels of student involvement without addressing the negative effects of student leadership. Neumann, Dempster & Skinner (2009) investigating the impact of positional leadership on secondary school leaders, identify; role and status, and self awareness as areas of a student's life that will be affected in both a positive and negative way through being given positional leadership responsibility. This study, as well as discussing the tensions raised by students, produces a model that attempts to negate or limit the influence of these negative factors

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research design

Below I will discuss with reference to relevant literature how best to address this investigations research questions:

How can the benefits of student leadership be offered to all senior students?

According to the students, what are the benefits of student leadership to the individual, and the school?

How can the roles of student leaders be made more effective?

Do student leaders value the experiences?

This study used a qualitative approach which was informed by the epistemological position of interpretivism (Bryman, 2008). This position recognises that the “study of the social world requires a different logic of research procedure, one that reflects the distinctiveness of humans as against the natural order” (p.15). The ontological position for this research will be constructivism, as propagated by Guba, Lincoln & Denzin (2008). The concept of leadership is something that has developed through interaction between people, a social construction rather than something external to them.

The naturalistic paradigm (Oliver, 2008) within which this research is based, assumes that the “social world exists in a state of fluid interaction, and that it has to be interpreted to be at least partially understood” (p.23). The naturalist view is that each person's reality is the result of the interrelation of all the parts of their lives affecting each other. These parts must be examined all together as each part has influence over the others. As this study is investigating the opinions

of the students, the naturalistic paradigm allows for the researcher to explore, through semi-structured interviews and observations, all the 'parts' of the student's life that contribute to their experiences of the leadership role. Lincoln and Guba sum this aspect of naturalistic paradigm by stating "social reality is a construction based upon the actor's frame of reference within the setting" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.80). Each individual student in this study will have varied past experiences, motivations and expectations (frames of reference), as well as differing responsibilities (contextually dependent). Wolf & Tymitz 1976-77 (as cited in Guba 1978 p.3) use the term "slice of life" to describe the data collected in naturalistic enquiry. The differentiating factor, I believe, between the use of a positivist paradigm and the chosen naturalist paradigm is the degree to which constraints are placed on the participants' responses when sharing this slice of life. A loosely structured interview in which the respondents are allowed to fire off at tangents, places very little constraint on the data when compared to a questionnaire which may limit the respondent to only a few choices of answers to predetermined questions.

The study is a case study based on a single secondary school in New Zealand. Case studies are commonly used in qualitative research (Yin, 1981) and are identified by Creswell (2008) as being suitable within a constructivist framework. Cohen, Mannion & Morrison (2007) contend that case studies are an appropriate tool for "observing the characteristics of an individual unit, - a child, a clique, a class or a school community" (p.258), as such this method is an apt fit for this study. Robert Yin explains succinctly why I believe the case study is appropriate for this research saying "the distinguishing characteristic of the case study is that it attempts to examine: (a) a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when (b) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 1981, p.13). In this

research the distinction between the phenomena that is student leadership and the context of each student's life and high school is a complex one. A description of the case study school, its leadership programme and selection process will now be given.

3.2 Research setting - The case study school

The case study school is a year 7 to 13 mixed comprehensive school located in New Zealand. The school is in a semi-rural setting and has a roll of approximately 450 students. The school has seen considerable growth over the past few years due to increased population in its catchment. The current structure of the school's leadership is based loosely on a distributed model of leadership. The principal and three assistant principals oversee seven faculties, each with a head of faculty and associated teaching staff. There is a dean for each year level who along with the form teachers are responsible for the students pastoral care. The structure of formal student leadership at the school involves eight elected prefects. Towards the end of the year students in years 11 and 12, the current prefects and staff get to vote for who they think should be the prefects for the following year. All students in year 12 (going into year 13) are available to be voted for. There is no explicit campaigning, however, during the year some year 12 students actively seek leadership opportunities with the intent of increasing their chances of becoming a prefect. Prior to the vote the principal explains to the school what is expected of the prefects and tries, through his words, to reduce the chances that it becomes a popularity contest. When discussing this risk, the principal explained that the vote count is not made public, it is used as a guide. The staff and current prefects votes are heavily weighted as the school believes they are more aware of students capacity and appropriateness to lead. The

principal reserves the right to deselect any student who does not reflect the school's Kawa² (values), as he stated “the student body doesn’t always know everything we know about a student” (Principal). Once votes are counted and the senior leadership team is satisfied, the top students are contacted and offered a role as a prefect. Any student can say no, although this has not happened in the past 15 years according to the teacher who works with the prefects. All the elected prefect group are interviewed by a panel including the principal and senior leadership team members and a head boy and headgirl are chosen. Early in their final year of school (second week of term one) the year13 cohort has a leadership camp. This day and night working and socialising together, has the intention of both bringing the group closer as a team and also giving some guidance about leadership. Students are informed of other leadership roles in the school and told who to contact for these

3.3 Data collection

To collect data for this study the following people were interviewed: All eight current prefects, five former prefects (past 3 years head students), two staff associated with student leaders and a sample of six year 13 students who are not in a named leadership position. The non-leader students were purposefully selected as students who had potential to be elected for leadership roles. Guidance from the school’s senior leadership team and current year level dean was sought in selecting these students. The concept of purposive sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1981) fits well with this study. They state “naturalistic inquiry is very different from conventional sampling. It is based on informational, not statistical considerations. Its purpose is to maximize information not facilitate generalisation” (p.202). They also state that “the object of the game is

² Kawa - protocols of the institution, values of the school. These are Personal Excellence, Courage and Respect

not to focus on the similarities that can be developed into generalizations but to detail the many specifics that give the context its unique flavour” (p.201). In this study the aim was to identify the benefits that the student leaders felt they obtained from their role, the tensions that they encountered, and to investigate how these tensions developed within the individual's specific situation.

The interviews were semi-structured and approximately 20-30 minutes long. As Lincoln & Guba (1981) state “the structured interview is the mode of choice when the interviewer knows what he or she does not know ... while the unstructured interview is the mode of choice when the interviewer does not know what he or she doesn’t know” (p.269). Using open questions encouraged students to share their beliefs about the value and benefits of their experiences, allowing what Bryman (2008) calls “rambling or going off at tangents” (p.437). In my interviews these tangents where often were students would explain or justify their stated opinions.

As the aim of naturalistic enquiry is “seeing through others’ eyes” (Bryman, 2008, p.465) participant observation was also used. To observe the student leaders in their natural setting the researcher visited ten assemblies which were run by the students, three prefect meetings and the ANZAC community service. Outside of formal occasions, observations were made during break times, noting interactions between student leaders, their peers, and the younger students. The researcher also got to observe various activities that were being run by senior students, most often the prefects. An interesting meeting to observe was the formal committee which included most of the prefects but also some of the non-student leaders interviewed. For all the observations the researcher was a non-participant, overt observer. The researcher disclosed to the students at their interviews that there would be observations conducted, and

gave a guide as to the types of situations this would happen in. None of the interviewees had any issue with this. At meetings the researcher made all present aware of my purpose in being at the meeting. The purpose of the observations was to try to experience the leader's world along with them. Observation allows the inquirer to experience the emotional responses, unconscious behaviours and group culture of the prefects. (Lincoln & Guba 1981). Field notes were taken during the observations and contribute to the report.

The triangulation of student interviews, staff interviews and student leader observations provided an in depth, accurate picture of the student leader experience. It is acknowledged that the student leader's role goes beyond the school gates. It is a limitation of the study that no observations were made of student leaders in this out of school time.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was given by the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee (ERHEC). Below is an outline of the ethical considerations this research encountered.

Informed Consent was gained from the principal of the case study school. This was achieved via a discussion around the research aims and objectives.

Both the former and current student leaders were contacted through their school and informed consent to be a part of the project was gained through letter & consent form attached in Appendix A & B. As the current Student Leaders are still at school, consent was gained from their parents or caregiver, prior to the interview. This approval was via a permission form

included in the letter. Each participant had the right to withdraw at any stage from the research and they were made aware of the ERHEC complaints procedure.

Social risk in this project could come from the students honest reflections of their experiences as student leaders. The current students, if identified, could be in a very embarrassing position as they have given opinion on the support, structure and value of student leadership in their current school. They may have identified their peers or school staff in a negative way. former prefects are also at similar risk of facing negative reaction from peers or former teachers if identified. To mitigate this risk anonymity and strict confidentiality was used. The author eliminated any data that may give a clue to the student's identity. Students are referred to with pseudonyms and no identifiable details are given about the school. During this report the prefects who have been interviewed are known by the pseudonym prefect 1 - 8 for confidentiality purposes. The head boy and headgirl are not identified any differently from the other prefects due to this putting their anonymity at risk. The researcher also interviewed five former head prefects of the school, referred to as 'former prefect 1-5' in the results. Six year 13 students who are not prefects but have shown leadership potential were also interviewed. Four of these students are house leaders, a role that requires the leader to organise and motivate students for house events that happen throughout the year. They also run the house meetings that happen twice per term. The other two year 13 students had had a variety of leadership experiences outside of the school. These interviewees are referred to as non prefect 1-6.

Each of these interviews lasted approximately 20-30 minutes and were semi-structured. They took place at the student's school or via skype for the former students. Each interviewee returned the permission slip and all were keen to be participants in the study. The researcher

reiterated the confidential nature of the interviews at the start, reminded the students that they could ask to end the conversation at any point and made it clear that the interview was being recorded for the researcher only. The participants were asked if they would like to read the transcripts however none took this option up. The principal did ask to read the results section prior to publication but returned no comments..

The interviews for the current student leaders and school staff, were conducted at their school however, the former prefects were interviewed via Skype due to their spread across the country / world. The interviews were recorded on a digital device then the file was password protected and deleted once transcribed. Only the researcher had access to the recording. All interviewees were offered the opportunity to check the transcript of their interview, none took this offer although one interviewee requested the opportunity to read the results before submission and this was complied with. Participants were made aware that the thesis would be marked by examiners then potentially published and placed in the UC library. The researcher's field notes, taken during the observations were anonymous and treated in the same way as interview transcripts.

Whilst I have been a teacher at the case study school, I was on a year-long sabbatical and therefore not involved in any way with the student's education this year. This went far in mitigating conflict of interest. It is however acknowledged that the researcher does potentially have a perceived, or real, power imbalance over the interviewees. Eder & Fingerson (2011) state "when interviewing children, it is essential that researchers begin by examining the power dynamics between adults and youth. Researchers do not always recognise that, in general, children have lower status than adults and lack power in western societies" (p.2). They argue

the underlying reason for this is the fact that children are taught throughout their lives to respect and obey adults. Reducing this power differential can be done through a variety of methods. Interviewing young people in their natural location, avoiding using complex language or terminology and engaging adolescents by asking questions that show an interest in their lives are all strategies identified by Brenner (2006). To try and make the setting natural for the current students, the interviews in this study took place at their school, during the day and in a room that all students are regular users of.

The interviewer used a semi-structured approach to allow flowing conversation and avoided technical language. The open ended question was used so that “the participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings” (Creswell 2012, p.218). Interestingly, as other researchers have found (Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan as cited in Eder & Fingerson 2011), the interviewer felt that there was a reciprocal benefit to the student leaders from the interviews. They provided the student leaders with an opportunity to reflect upon and discuss their leadership with a non-judgemental interested adult. Another consideration around the power imbalance is the concept of the student saying what they believe the interviewer wants to hear. While I can not ensure that this did not happen, the use of open questions and using a naturalistic approach to the study goes some way to demonstrating that there is no particular response that the interviewer is looking for. When considering ‘truth’ in the context of this qualitative study, it became apparent that observations post interviews were in essence, validating what had been proclaimed during the interviews. The researcher, conscious of the power differential due to age, occupation, social standing and potentially ethnicity, was able to cross reference interviews against observations, thus giving some degree of certainty that the data is real, not just fictitious ideals made up to

please the researcher.

3.5 Processing the Data

Within the naturalist paradigm there are many strategies for the analysis of data. For this study inductive analysis was used. Inductive analysis comes from the data rather than deductive analysis where a hypothesis is tested (Lincoln & Guba, 1981). “Inductive analysis begins not with theories or hypothesis but with the data themselves from which theoretical categories and relational propositions may be arrived at by inductive reasoning processes” (p.333). Creswell (2012) suggests dividing the data into segments of information before labelling the segments with codes. The researcher then looked to collapse and combine overlapping segments in order to create themes. The respondents’ interview responses were segmented based on the researcher’s induction and the process identified above followed. The interconnectedness of the data made this process complex. The challenge for the researcher in presenting the data was the length of the interviews. Each of the 21 interviews, when transcribed covered multiple pages thus it should be noted that this chapter contains selected data. The researcher initially eliminated text that he considered irrelevant then subjectively selected the themes and thus data which would inform the discussions.

The themes identified in the next chapter took many attempts to create, with the author eventually deciding that the thematic section of the results needed to be complemented by composite narratives. The justification for these stories is covered in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Background

The results section is designed to provide a portrait of the students' experiences of leadership at the case study school. The themes created for this section link with the research questions posed at the start of the study, this is shown in the table below.

Research question	Related results theme
How can the benefits of student leadership be offered to all senior students?	Strategies for the development of student leadership
According to the students, what are the benefits of student leadership to the individual, and the school?	Impact on school and community of student leadership Personal development of student leadership
How can the roles of student leaders be made more effective?	Challenges of student leadership Strategies for the development of student leadership
Do student leaders value the experiences?	Responsibility and expectations of student leaders

The results chapter firstly uses the themes identified above to share the experiences and opinions of the interviewees through direct quote and notes from observations. The second section of the results chapter uses composite narratives' as a means of connecting the reader more closely with the experiences of the students. These 'stories' will also be used in future leadership development programmes at the case study school, giving students an understanding of the issues and emotional challenges that they will encounter in their leadership roles. There is in section 4.6 an explanation and justification for the use of these narratives.

4.2 Responsibility and Expectations of student leaders

This section presents the data concerned with the responsibility and expectation associated with student leadership. I begin by examining how the prefects are viewed by younger students followed by identifying when the prefects first had aspirations to be a prefect. The prefects previous leadership experiences are identified and their expectations of the prefect role shared. Next I cover how the prefects perceive the school's expectations on them, the time commitment and workload of being a prefect and the responsibility associated with the role. Finally I discuss the prefects views on being a role model.

To open the interviews the participants were all asked about their opinions of past student leaders. *How did you view the prefects and head boy and girl when you were a junior student at school?*

The responses to this question showed that participants unanimously held prefects in very high regard and demonstrated the importance of the weekly assembly. "I looked up to the prefects, everybody at school looked up to them" (prefect 5), was a very typical response. The concept of

mana or respect was also discussed frequently, “they were inspiring and intimidating in equal measure” (prefect 2), “they were people that everybody wanted to be” (prefect 8), “the prefects were recognised and respected around school as they were seen each week in assembly, wearing their number one’s” (prefect 4). As younger students the respondents acknowledged that prefects were very identifiable - this in most cases, was due to them leading the whole school assemblies each week. “A big part of the prefect role is to run school assemblies, not just the order of the assembly but speaking, celebrating student success and maintaining the expectations of behaviour in the auditorium. The prefects are visible and on their A game during these events so make a positive impression” (teacher 1). This teacher went on to describe how the school uses the assembly as an opportunity to give the prefects more authority. They are charged with settling the students before staff enter the auditorium, as well as controlling the formal exit at the end of assembly. “This task has given the prefects more respect from the student body. They can use the time to connect with students whilst showing that they are in control and have the support of the teachers” (teacher 1). She continues saying that this recent change, staff used to control the exit, has allowed the prefects to visibly grow in confidence. The teacher says that she believes “having the respect of the student body is the difference between enjoying the role and suffering the role” (teacher 1).

Away from the assembly the interviewees identified that prefects were always open to talking to younger students, however, there was also mention that the prefects were “intimidating”, “scary” and “very big” people. The view that prefects were on a similar level to teachers was discussed by three interviewees, “they were the link between students and teachers, they worked alongside the teachers, you did what they told you like you would for a teacher” (prefect 6).

The question of when the current and past prefects had first aspired to be in leadership roles was answered in two ways. The majority of the participants identified around Year 10 or 11 (14-16 year old) as being when they first thought about the role. The others said that they had never really envisaged themselves in the role as they had never held a leadership position in school. "I didn't really consider myself to be in line for a prefect position as some people are more natural leaders, also what you are into counts. I'm not really sporty or academic so I may be a bit limited in my involvement in school" (prefect 6).

All except for one of the prefects had had some type of leadership role in school during their junior school years. This finding relates to Malcolm Gladwell's book *Outliers*. In it he argues that people who become good at something have been given favourable treatment or support earlier in their lives. Gladwell (2008) states "people don't rise from nothing. We do owe something to parentage and patronage. The people who stand before kings may look like they did it all themselves. But in fact they are invariably beneficiaries of hidden advantages" (p.19). What the hidden advantage is we can only guess but it is clear that once on the leadership path students are more likely to be selected for further leadership opportunity. Six of this group had been junior house leaders, a role that exists for the last term of each school year due to the senior school having left for examinations. The junior house leader role is an opportunity for students to develop their ability to motivate, organise and communicate in a formal leadership position. They self nominate before staff select who they think is most appropriate for the position. The junior house leader role can be a challenging experience as it incorporates the schools Arts week. This week is predominantly student lead. Each house produces a performance based around drama, dance, art and music. The junior house leaders have a high

degree of input into the direction of their house performance and it is during this week that many students discover the enjoyment and pressures of leadership.

The other interviewee had previously been student council representatives and sports team captain. Many of the prefects had held other leadership roles within school such as kapa haka leader (kaea), sports team captain, student council representative but also many had held leadership positions outside of school such as St John's and the Guides.

The interviewees were then asked to talk about their expectations of the student leadership role prior to starting it.

Responses to this question were varied, three out of eight of the current prefect group, said that the role was what they had expected. When asked why they thought this was, two of them identified having friendships with older students who had been prefects as the reason that they knew what the role entailed. One interviewee went further explaining "there was a good tie between Year 12 and 13 from [the previous year]. They informed us in lots of detail about the role, it was good to hear their experiences" (prefect 2). Other interviewees claimed to have little expectation, "I didn't really have a clue other than running assemblies, about what the prefects actually did so I didn't really have many expectations" (prefect 8). Setting expectations and sharing them with the prefects is an area that will be investigated further later.

When asking the interviewees about the time commitment of being a student leader there was an obvious split between those who thought there was too high a workload and those who found the role relatively "manageable". Interestingly the former prefects were *all* of the opinion that they had handled the extra workload with relative ease. "I kind of cruised through the experience, it was fun and I did what I could, but it didn't feel like a pressure" (former prefect 1).

“I thought there would be more specific activities that I would have to be involved with. Most of the role was just setting a good example, leading by example, which is just being yourself so not much extra work” (former prefect 2). This opinion was echoed by other former prefects, “most of what I did as a prefect was off my own back. People I knew in the community or school would ask me to help out with things and I’d just say yes, I tried to make the most of the role because I enjoyed doing it.” (former prefect 1). Of the current student leaders five agreed with past student leaders that the extra workload is not too demanding. “I can handle the jobs required of a prefect whilst still achieving academically and in my [sport] and at work” (prefect 5). The other three current prefects saw it differently. They were generally disappointed with what little they felt they had achieved so far in their leadership role. They all identified lack of time as being the limiting factor. “We cover such a range of areas across the school, too much, I didn’t realise the prefects organised all of these things” (prefect 7). “You have to be involved in everything at school, everything is your business” (prefect 1). “Alongside of passing year 13, gaining University Entrance, applying to get into Uni, work, sport and hanging out with your family and friends there is just not enough time” (prefect 7). These differences in view will be examined later, however, it is pertinent at this stage to share the thoughts of the staff who work alongside, and, to a large degree set the expectations. “At the start of the year I ask, how can you help the school, then I give them some examples of what has been done or could be done, from there it’s up to them how much they do, how far they go with it” (teacher 1). She continues “each prefect group is different, each group has its own strengths and weaknesses, within each group there can be quite a lot of variation in motivation levels. You have to adapt the expectations for each group”, the teacher then discusses how there are a lot of tasks given to the prefect group that are rarely seen by others, road patrol, leavers hoodies, formal committee, school council, reporting to the board, weekly meetings, organising assembly and peer

mentoring of younger students. “This year we have asked the prefect group to support one particular year group that has plenty of children who are struggling, they mentor them through a variety of means and some [of the prefects] give it more time and effort than others” (teacher 1). The teacher did allude to the school being a relatively small one and this limiting the opportunities for student leadership but she also acknowledged that if the students take initiative, then they can create many extra opportunities, especially within the local community. Each of the eight prefects at the school takes responsibility within one area, these are academic, sporting, cultural and environment. The prefect team “works together to promote these four areas and the school’s values” (teacher 1). The teacher is aware of the potential overload that student leaders may face; she stated “we need to be careful, if we pile every task on them [the prefects] they won’t get it done” (teacher 1).

The interviews then moved on to discuss how the students experience the responsibility of being a leader.

“Having a badge has given me the obligation and jurisdiction to step in” (prefect 1). This idea of the role giving authority and power was mentioned by most of the student leaders interviewed. Interestingly, one student explained how he felt that having a formal leadership role had reduced his authority, “I find it hard to pipe up [speak up] being a prefect. People think that I’m doing it because I’m a prefect, they think ‘he has to say that’ rather than me saying something just as a regular student. It’s more effective if there is no underlying reason for saying something other than its what you believe in. I think I got more respect last year when I was just ‘[name]’ and not ‘[name] the prefect. What I did came across more genuine” (prefect 4). This perception is an interesting one but was only picked up by this individual student. Observation

of the leadership students did not support his view. The researcher's field notes identified that this specific student was very popular with the younger students at the school. Also noted were many occasions where students interacted with him.

The responsibility of being a role model was discussed at length by many of the students. They are all very aware of the power and influence they hold as student leaders and all work hard to maintain their personal standards. All of the student leaders identified their own personal academic achievements, as well as their conduct, as needing to be of the highest standard. Comments like "it's always in the back of your mind that you're a role model" (prefect 3) and "people are always watching, judging how you act" (prefect 6) demonstrate the pressure that the leaders feel they are under, as figureheads in the school. And not just in the school, "when I'm out I think about being a prefect, it's not like I'm a party animal but if I'm having a big night and I think 'shall I have another drink', I know that I am a prefect and the stuff that goes with it", when asked if this was a good thing they replied "yes probably, it means we don't bring the school into disrepute" (prefect 5).

The pressure to "act like a prefect" (prefect 8) is clear in observations of prefect meetings as well as in their comments. The students often ask each other questions concerning the image they are portraying and how they should say something, particularly around the running of the school's formal assembly. My intuition was that the school had emphasised the student leaders about their effect as role models in and out of school. This thought was confirmed when speaking to the staff, "we do stress to them at the start of the year that you are a prefect both in and out of school and at all times, you never stop being a prefect unless you mess up and therefore we have to drop you from the team" (teacher 1). She carries on saying how, in her opinion, this pressure helps many of the student leaders. "They start to understand

responsibility having experienced it. They quickly begin to appreciate the responsibility given to them by the voters, the students and staff, not wanting to let those people down. A couple of prefects this year have stepped up to the role. They had the potential to be disruptive and negative influences on the year group but they have really risen to the position. I don't believe they would be as mature as they are now if they had not had the opportunities and responsibilities that they have had as student leaders" (teacher 1). This pressure to conform was universally accepted as a positive by all student leaders interviewed. One student leader did note that if she gets something wrong or is late people referred to her by her leadership role rather than by her name. "I sometimes wish my friends would just let me be [name] rather than always going on about me as [leadership role]" (prefect 1). Another stated that she struggled to know how she 'should' react in some situations, "I question if I am representing the school in the right way" (prefect 6). The principal was very clear in his expectation of the student leaders, "they are a role model first, they show other students how things should be done, both in terms of work ethic and behaviour. How they command themselves around the place is important, in the classroom, sports fields, on the stage, [the prefects] are what we are trying to produce. These students exemplify the school's Kawa [values] and demonstrate what others should aspire to" (principal).

4.3 Impact on school & community

The next section of results was in response to questioning around the impact that the student leaders felt they were having or had had on the school community. Initially the interviewees were asked about their level of impact as a leader before being asked what they were proudest of. The second half of this section addresses the interviewees opinion on the level and type of

leadership that student leaders were doing. The questions of leading or being led, and whether the students had a common understanding of the nature of leadership was discussed.

The overriding feeling from the current student leaders interviewed was that they felt that they were not making as much impact as they would like. Given that the interviews were conducted at the start of term 3, only two thirds of the way through their tenure, it is surprising how pessimistic the student leaders were about their ability to leave their mark. “We [the prefect group] had such big aspirations at the start of the year, but it’s always going to be that way, whatever you achieve you always think you could do more” (prefect 7). Another student (prefect 8) said “I don’t think we’ve done as much as we wanted but we’ve balanced prefecting and school work well”. The focus of maintaining high academic standards mentioned earlier is also given by four students as a barrier to making more of their leadership role. “I really stepped up my effort in class and with homework so this has significantly impacted what I have been able to give to being a prefect” (prefect 2). On reflection by the researcher, this question which was generally asked as “do you feel you have made an impact in your role” or “do you think you have left your mark”, was probably hard for interviewees to respond to without sounding ostentatious. This said, I believe that the students were genuinely disappointed with the amount that they had achieved, they were generally up front in the interviews about other issues that could make them seem immodest.

When asked what they were most proud of in their leadership role a more positive picture of their impact around school emerges. “The younger kids will really remember us, well, I will remember them so I guess it’s both ways” (prefect 3), “we have really connected with the younger students, playing hustle, hanging with them at break, being in class with them, I think

we have made a difference for that year group” (prefect 6). “Little kids come up to you and want to talk; at school, walking home or playing sport, it’s a pretty cool feeling and shows that they like us” (prefect 5). The current prefect group has worked hard with the younger students, they value those experiences and feel like both they and the younger students benefit from this effort. Examples of how they have worked with the junior school include organising a lip sync house competition, a hustle house competition, a staff v students 4 square event, running dodgeball competition, hanging out with juniors when on ‘duty’ (each prefect takes 2 break time duties), going into class to support students, supervising students who have been removed from class and listening to the junior students through focus groups. The researcher has observed many of these situations and the field notes paint a very positive picture. “The interactions are meaningful, positive and respectful. The younger students value the contribution that the prefects are making and like being associated with them. The activity seems to matter little, it is the relationship with the senior student that appears important to the younger students” (field notes). One student leader went so far as to say “we have a responsibility to talk to people and listen to them, particularly the younger kids as they can’t always speak up for themselves” (prefect 2). The level of empathy and connection was very clear when observing the leadership students during break times. The leaders, whilst “obviously enjoying the attention they receive, had smiles on their faces and looked to be thoroughly enjoying interacting with the juniors” (field notes). “Getting to play those kids games again is great” (prefect 4).

Two of the student leaders interviewed mentioned the input from the rest of the year 13 cohort. “We spend a lot of time working with the younger students, I really feel that the whole year group is involved not just the prefects and therefore we can have more impact than previous years” (prefect 5). The involvement of the rest of the cohort has been an issue in previous

years. This message comes clearly from the past students interviewed and will be covered in the next section of results.

The ANZAC community service was often mentioned as a highlight of the leadership experience. Interestingly of the six past student leaders five mentioned the ANZAC service as a highlight. For one former prefect the experience was both his highlight and most challenging experience of his time as a student leader. Speaking in front of assembly of 450 students and 40 staff becomes easy compared to speaking outside, at the war memorial, in front of hundreds of people from your community. It is a point that will be discussed later, that the only formal activity the student leaders do in the community, often gets identified as the item that student leaders are most proud of.

The interviewer then asked the students if they thought they were leading or being led. The teacher in charge of the prefects is very clear in her view of her role. She likens her position to “sitting on the back of the bus rather than driving it” (teacher 1). This metaphor serves as a solid platform from which to understand the school’s expectations of the student leaders. The teacher goes on to say that she is often tempted to step in and take over the leadership of an initiative but refrains from doing so. “How will they learn and develop their leadership skills and knowledge if I do? Sometimes things will fail due to lack of organisation or drive, it’s very frustrating, but that’s leadership, you get back what you put in” (teacher 1). The principal was in agreement concerning the level of independence the leaders are given. He stated “our expectation is that they take a lead in things, we say here is something that could be done, if you want to do it, decide how and go for it. We will provide the external support if needed” (Principal). He also acknowledged that “not all student leaders have the skills, drive or energy to lead, sometimes they need to be told what is required of them” (principal).

The students appear to understand this structure, “[teacher] gives us the bottom line, we choose how far to take it” (prefect 4). The teacher describes how the prefect group meets once a week. She puts her point of view forward and takes minutes but doesn’t give answers, just redirects their thinking if needed.

As expected, after hearing the teacher's ‘back of the bus’ metaphor, all students agreed that they were left to lead activities or initiatives themselves. Some students identified this as a reason that not much had been achieved this year, “I think we’re doing the job just as well as the last person but we could do much more. If we had more guidance & support from staff we would have to get on and do our ideas’ (prefect 1). “Most of what we’ve done has been our ideas, we need a little push or hurry up every now and then but I think we as a prefect group have led most things” (prefect 4). “I had an idea for launching [initiative] in the school and we were driven to get it going but we didn’t get any staff support so the idea just fell by the wayside. You need a teacher or two on board with something like that” (prefect 8). Most of the interviewees identified a need or desire for staff input to set the direction and apply the pressure for action to occur. But the students appreciated the freedom to make decisions for themselves. “I have a position through which I feel I can help, I can make a difference if I want to especially with the younger students” (prefect 2). The prefects all agreed that they were given the freedom to lead. The principal used an example, the 40 hour famine sponsored by World Vision, as a model that he sees being successful with student leaders. “The students go away and meet with other 40 hour famine student leaders from around [the area] and a facilitator. They are taught how to run the programme in their school, there is a clear structure and order, they are given resources and share ideas about how they can motivate other students to get behind the cause.

The students then go back into their own schools and run the programme. They generally don't need much staff input as they have a clear structure to follow. Part of student leadership is us training them. I feel we sometime leave student leaders in the lurch a bit" (principal). This issue, the level of freedom given to the student leaders and their ability to use it, will be a discussion in the next chapter.

One of the former prefects did question the amount of real leadership. The former prefect said that "some members of the prefect group were not really committed to the role. They were reluctant to put themselves outside their comfort zone and didn't want to do any more than was asked of them. This made it difficult for us prefects who did want to take initiative as the support wasn't there" (former prefect 1). That year group was a very small one with approximately 30 students in year 13. They had only five prefects of whom only four saw out the year at school. Other student leaders also identified varying levels of commitment to the role as a barrier to making a bigger impact. "It's good that we all have our own strengths, we work in the area that we know most about, [sport, culture, environment, academic] however some areas don't actually get anything done. Some prefects don't do much, there is no real pressure to do anything" (prefect 6). It became clear during the interviews and observations that the level of commitment to the role had a big effect on the prefects own experience but also on that of their fellow prefects. When the principal was asked about this he identified "selecting the right people" as the main challenge for student leadership in schools. In his experience the school generally gets it right. This view is supported by the teacher in charge of the student leaders; she stressed the importance of getting the right students as the key to effective leadership. "Knowing the students from year seven means I have a good connection and understanding of who they are" (teacher 1). The principal summed up the identification of leaders by saying "to

be a leader you have to have a helping gene, you're not in leadership for yourself. You have to want to enhance the place you are in. Leadership is not for everyone" (principal). This is an interesting comment as it shows that the principal believes that leadership is partly in a person's genes.

Another point to note was the confusion around what leadership actually was. A former leader responded "was I leading? I'm not really sure, I was always leading by example, however, little in the way of organising or making decisions was asked of me. So in one way I was just doing what I had been asked to do, represent the school in a positive way and show people how to be good" (former prefect 2).

4.4 Personal Development

During the initial stages of this study it was the intention to try and discover what student leaders perceived to be the benefits of their leadership experience. It quickly became clear that the current student leaders had limited awareness, or could not articulate, the benefits of the experience they were living. Student leaders struggled to differentiate between benefits they received due to being in a leadership position and those they received through being in year 13. With many of the prefects being involved in leadership roles outside the school they struggled to identify specific benefits that they had gained through their role as a prefect. Thus the focus of the research evolved to look at the whole leadership experience rather than just the benefits of it. By exploring the whole experience participants seemed to be more able to define how the role had affected them. In this section interviewees comments around the personal benefits of being a prefect are shared,

When asked the question, *how do you think being in a leadership role has benefited you*, most students responded with mention of the improvements in their self confidence. When asked by the interviewer to elaborate on this, the underlying reasons for their increased confidence were varied. "I am more willing and likely to put my hand up for things. Before I became a prefect I didn't think I was good enough to do leadership stuff, so I never put my name forward" (prefect 8). The development of confidence through merely being selected as a leader rang true for five student leaders. These students were those who, on anecdotal evidence, had not had as much leadership experience previously. What they were really talking about was development in their own self belief. "The best feeling I had was that I had been voted for by staff and students" (prefect 3). Other responses identified specific situations in which they thought that they were now more confident, "the very next day after I was told I would be a prefect I felt way more confidence even just walking around school. I now walk round school talking to heaps of people from all year groups and staff, and I address issues that I would in the past have ignored" (prefect 8). Public speaking, not surprisingly, was a major area in which confidence had developed. "If you speak in assembly and don't bugger it up then you feel good for the rest of the day, particularly for me, as I'm not very good at it" (prefect 4). "We get to speak in front of the whole school and staff every Tuesday. It was nerve wracking at first but now I enjoy it. I would not have had this experience if I wasn't a prefect" (prefect 6). non prefect 1 stated "I love house meetings as I get to stand up in front of my house and inspire them. It has really helped my confidence". Students who had regularly spoken in public before identified this as a reason that they didn't have an issue with public speaking. The teacher associated with the prefects agrees with the student perception that they grow in confidence. She states "their whole

demeanour on stage improves, they want to speak rather than being scared of it, they stand tall and look out more, it's great to see the development" (teacher 1).

When the Principal was asked what he thought the main benefits for the students of leadership experiences, he stated "it broadens them as people. The range of experiences they have, creates a growth mindset that they can take beyond school. Sometimes high achieving students are asked to take a lot of leadership roles. This can make them a little egocentric, however being selected to serve the whole school makes them more humble, empathetic and worldly" (principal). He also identifies improvements in self confidence, due to people showing faith in them, as being another benefit.

Two of the year 13 students who were not involved in the prefect group, identified the interpersonal skills they had learnt as leaders, as the most important benefit. "At the start I was unsure how to deal with the poor behaviour, but I tried things. Sometimes the kids just got worse other times they got better so I figured it out. Now I'm confident they will respond to me" (non prefect 3). "At the start of this year I struggled with some people, but through being a house leader and [other leadership roles], I have learnt to adapt my style of teaching or leading to motivate reluctant people" (non prefect 4).

After improvements in confidence, relating to and working with others, was the next most commonly mentioned benefit of student leadership. All current and former prefects mentioned improvements in their ability to relate to others at some point in their interview. "I have a better understanding of other people" (prefect 6) was a very clear way that one student described the perceived benefit of being a leader. Being able to relate better to a range of people, particularly staff and younger students was often mentioned. "I remember being told to go talk to the

veterans after the ANZAC assembly. They were like real old and deaf so none of us really wanted to, once we did it was awesome. They told us funny stories from their time in the war and wanted us to show them our skiing videos!” (prefect 4). “As a leader you’ve got to be ok with speaking in assembly but it’s more than that, other people have to be able to talk to you and you have to listen and talk to them” (former prefect 2). In an interesting add on to the last quote former prefect 2 stated “I have learnt the benefit of investing time and energy into something that’s for other people”. Another student reflected this sentiment saying “helping people has become quite a passion of mine” (prefect 1). When the interviewer pressed further into this it became clear that the student did not really know about leadership styles or principles and was unsure if this helping people was really what he ‘should’ be doing as a student leader. This comment will be discussed in the next chapter as the author believes there is a need for students to understand more on the nature of leadership so that they are aware of, and confident in, their own leadership style. Student 6 sums up the importance of interpersonal skills when she says “someone who can get along with everyone is the ideal prefect”.

The next identified benefit of experiencing student leadership was working as part of a team. All but one of the interviewees stated that they had learnt to work better as part of a team during their leadership experience. This is a very positive result and fits with previous research which found that young people associate leadership more with collaboration and cooperation than with the Great Man theory (Carlyle 1841) . This will be discussed in more detail in the next section. “We all [prefects] work as a team, we all see each other as equals (prefect 5). “I have a better understanding of how things work in management groups, understanding how other people in your team work and being able to [work along] with them” (prefect 6). One interviewee had just written an assessment on leadership principles and so was happy to explain how the prefect

group were “good at using collaborative leadership, each of us working on our bit but all supporting each other at the same time. Last year there was a different setup with one dominant leader, autocratic, I think” (prefect 7).

One particularly pleasing aspect of personal development that was referred to was the students’ attitudes and behaviour. Both the teacher in charge of prefects and the principal talked about the significant improvement in behaviour and attitude that some students made when they became prefects. The principal reflected that some students, when they become leaders, have had to step up in a particular aspect of their personality. Be it with their school work, behaviour or attitude to others. He goes on to say that “some students can become egocentric if they have too much power within their peers, but becoming a student leader humbles them as they are serving the whole school community” (principal). He sees students become “more worldly, empathetic, believe in themselves more and develop a growth mindset that they can take beyond school” (principal). Herein lies the challenge for the principle and this study, how do you create opportunities for all your students to achieve this. The teacher in charge of prefects occasionally sees students who could have been very negative influences on the school develop with the pressure and responsibilities of being a prefect. I don’t believe they would be as mature now if they had not had all those things” (teacher 1). Some of the students themselves identify improvements in attitude or focus as being a benefit of leadership. “I knew I had to knuckle down and improve my grades when I became a prefect, it’s embarrassing if you’re on stage but not getting any Excellence awards” (prefect 8). “When I’m with my friends we fool around a bit but if there are younger kids around you have to tone it down a bit, I’m aware of being a role model all the time. At first it was a real effort because when I was younger I’d get in trouble a lot but now I feel it comes naturally to do the right thing. I’ve probably lasted

at school because of being a role model. Staff also seem to respect me more” (non prefect 3). The comment regarding improved respect from staff was repeated by five other interviewees. It is clear from these comments that there is a reciprocal respect between the staff and the leaders. This is certainly valued by the students. “It was good to be treated as being on the same level as teachers and working with them” (former prefect 1).

The final area of benefits that the respondents discussed centred around improvements in time management. Lack of time was highlighted by many student leaders and thus it is no surprise that they also perceived that their time management skills got better. “I had to stop procrastinating, something that I excelled at prior to becoming a prefect” (prefect 2) and “it’s the responsibility that makes you more efficient, being relied upon means you can’t put it off” (prefect 1). Comments about time pressure often related to the students’ own self expectations. Those who felt they were not achieving as much as they had hoped in their leadership role reported a lack of time as the major cause.

The researcher then asked the interviewees if they thought that the experiences of being a student leader in school would, or had, help(ed) them beyond school.

The researcher had expected all students to jump straight to the fact that they were able to put the role on their Curriculum Vitae thus enhancing employment or further education prospects.

Only three students discussed this aspect without being prompted.

Most students responded by relating to the previous discussion around the benefits they perceived they were gaining. “I can now imagine myself sat around a boardroom of a company working with other people to make decisions for the company, its just like we worked as a prefect team” (prefect 4). Another student continue this theme, “I now have experience of how

an organisation runs, the issues and kind of things that management have to deal with” (prefect3). It was impressive to hear how the majority of the students were able to relate the skills and qualities to the workplace. “I can bring aspects from both my sporting and prefect roles into business meetings when I’m at work” (prefect 4), “being a prefect is like work experience as leader of the school” (prefect 5). “I now know that I want to be in a position where I can make a difference at work, I have found that I take pride in what I do when I’m a leader, I want to find a job where I can continue this” (prefect 6). “The things I’ve learnt about myself will help me beyond school, I can speak to most people now without worrying” (prefect 2). A past student leader described a situation where he finds himself in-charge of a group of men all considerably older and from very different backgrounds to him but he feels respected and valued. He puts this down his ability to connect with the men, a skill he says he learnt as a student leader (former prefect 3).

Being able to put a student leadership role on their CV was identified as tangible benefit. “It’s good for employees to see you’ve taken on leadership roles” (prefect 3). “Better chance of getting into halls at University” (prefect 4). “[My current employer] asked a lot during my interview about my [student leadership] role. They seemed impressed and I believe it helped me get the job. I have to make some decisions and manage other people” (former prefect 2). A few students identified organisational skills as potentially being of future benefit, “bringing events together where people rely on you, it’s harder to not do something when you’re being relied upon by other people” (prefect 7).

4.5 Challenges of student leadership

The challenges and issues of student leadership were the next areas of discussion during the interviews. Many of the students offered ideas for improvements when answering this question, however the author will separate these into a final section after the challenges have been discussed. This section of results starts off with by far the most discussed topic over all the issues. That being what the author has labelled “peer relations”.

4.5.1 Challenges with peer relationships

The most common first response to the question of challenges or issues with their student leadership experience was focussed around the student’s peers.

Difficulty in working with other student leaders was identified by five out of 20 student interviewees. Most apportioned the problem to differences in expectation or values.

Judgements around the amount of work others were doing and their lack of commitment to the role were made. “Some [prefects] didn’t even turn up to our meetings, this meant that we couldn’t get much done” (former prefect 1). “Some weeks I feel like I’m out of control because I have so much on, not everybody is like that, I think it’s because I place so much expectation on myself” (prefect 1).

Three interviewees identified “petty friendship issues” (former prefect 2) as being disruptive to the cohesion of the leadership group. These were mostly considered as minor issues that were easily dealt with; however a bigger issue that was mentioned frequently was that of working with the rest of the year 13 cohort. “Having students in leadership roles can create quite a divide.

Certain personalities within the year group seem to have an issue with leadership groups” (prefect 2).

This sentiment was quite common amongst the interviewees.

“They [non prefects] seem to think we prefects have to do everything. They pull their noses when we try to ask them to help. They seem to think that because we got selected they don’t have to do anything” (prefect 3). “Leave it to the prefects seems to be the general feeling” (prefect 7).

“I tried to delegate by asking some year 13 friends if they wanted to run the [annual initiative] committee. They said yes but then nothing got done and now it feels too late in the year to get it going, it’s annoying because it makes me look lazy” (prefect 8).

A student who did not have a leadership role discussed at length how last year they were very involved in supporting junior students who had behavioural difficulties. The student had earned significant mana with a group of young boys through involvement with extracurricular activities.

“I really enjoyed this and gained the respect of the kids, more so than the teachers. Teachers would ask me to come and sit with [name] in their class so that they would behave. I was working with him most days sometimes a couple of times, it felt like I made a real difference.

This year I’m not doing much, the prefects have taken it [working with junior students] on. I have done some time with [name] but nothing like last year” (non prefect 3). When asked why this was, the student explained that they had hoped to be a prefect and when they didn’t get the role they were unsure if they were wanted to do the mentoring. “It doesn’t feel as right this year, I don’t want to tread on toes”. This unease at taking leadership roles when not a prefect was echoed by more than one student. They all struggled to both explain and understand this phenomenon but it is certainly there. The researcher views this as a potential loss of

confidence as a result of not gaining selection to the leadership group. It was mentioned by a former prefect in a post school environment and will be discussed in the analysis chapter.

“For some people it feels like prefects versus students in year 13” (prefect 2). Conversely, one current student leader was of the opinion that this year, the year 13 students had been much more cooperative than previous years. “We have worked hard to include other year 13 students in our activities because in previous years they turned against the prefects. We were very aware about not letting that happen, they are our friends, we are just the same as them” (prefect 5).

The teacher charged with directing the prefect group identified this issue. She stated “I really encourage them [the prefect group] to use the next layer of leaders, their peers who could have been prefects but didn’t get selected”. She is also aware of the difficulty in doing this and agrees that there has been a ‘leave it to the prefect’ culture in some years. “Sometimes this is caused by a lack of initiative on the prefects’ part. The challenge for us as a school is engaging those talented students who just come to school, do what they have to, then go home, without leaving their mark. We need to use their skills more, get them to leave their mark” (teacher 1).

This sentiment was a key message in the Principal interview. “How do we get the rest of year 13 to lead? Doing Duke of Edinburgh Hillary award is good, but by year 12 and 13 there are less students than in Year 10 and 11. Having student council and peer mentoring is the best way. Both these things need resource and staff commitment to facilitate them. We currently don’t have these things as no one on staff put their hand up to run them” (principal). The student’s not involved in the prefect group were unanimous in their thoughts on the matter, “We [non prefects] don’t get asked to do a lot’ (non prefect 3), “there is not really much else to do if you don’t become a prefect” (non prefect 1), “even the house leader role is pretty limited in what you

are asked to do” (non prefect 4), “there needs to be more opportunity [for leadership]. The prefects get a lot of attention and say there is too much to do yet there are lots of good leaders who could be doing something” (non prefect 2). Although the students say that they want to be explicitly asked to take on leadership roles they are not being consistent in their stance. When there peers in the prefect group ask them for support, the evidence is that it is not always given. The reasons for this are not clear, however it is an issue that will be discussed later in the study.

4.5.2 Challenge of time

The challenge of time was the second most common challenge that the interviewees identified. “There is too much to cover, too many areas for the leaders to affect. We are spread too thinly and don’t get things done” (prefect 6). “Balancing leadership role and academic work is definitely a challenge; I prioritised my school work and have not done everything I wanted as a leader” (prefect 3). A concern that the teacher in charge of the prefects highlighted was around maintaining drive and motivation for the role throughout the year. “Some student leaders disappear towards the latter part of their year. They run a couple of activities, do the leadership thing well for two terms then appear to give up. Whether they feel they have got the badge and have done enough for the school or whether they are genuinely too busy, I don’t know but I suspect it’s the former for some of them” (teacher 1). None of the students discussed this change in enthusiasm, but some students, as discussed earlier, were open to identifying other leaders who they felt didn’t pull their weight all year.

A lack of recognition was discussed either directly or indirectly by four participants. “We don’t get told if we’re doing a good job or not so it’s hard to know if we’re leaving our mark” (prefect

8). Another student stated “I am often questioning if I’m doing it right. Am I leading the school the way I should be, is the principal happy with what we are doing, are we doing enough” (prefect 2). Evidence of the importance of feedback came from a house leader. When asked about their impact they stated “one boy said to me that I’d been the best house leader that he had had in his time at school; this made me feel good. We don’t really get any feedback so comments like this are nice” (non prefect 2). I feel that this is a significant issue and will be discussed in detail during the next section. The lack of feedback has connection to the theme of self belief highlighted earlier. One former prefect described how, upon leaving the school to further their studies, they very quickly became unknown. The student described how in his leadership role everybody in the school, and many people in the local community, knew his name and looked up to him. “When I went to uni, nobody knew me, nobody asked me to do anything to help. I struggled with that. I’d go to the supermarket and not speak to anyone. Back in school when I went to the super heaps of people would say hi and chat, they all knew me as [leadership role]” (former prefect 3).

4.5.3 Challenge with support

When the interviewees were asked about support and training, there were mixed opinions. Roughly half the students believed that there was enough support and that they didn’t feel that they needed any extra training. These students generally thought that they had already developed their leadership skills and that’s why they were selected. The other point of view was that more training or at least being given a clearer picture of what was expected of them, would have made the role easier and more effective. The interviewees provided many ideas for the enhancement of the student leader role. Three ideas will now be discussed.

4.6 Ideas and Suggestions for change

The participants were asked if there were any changes or ideas they had as to how the experience of student leadership could be improved. A range of answers were given to this question however, having more structure around the role of student leadership was by far the most common. "With more structure we would get more done" (prefect 2). "We need more direction at the start of the year. There is a whole lot of things you could do and trying to decide what to do took us ages" (prefect 3).

"Having a year planner with activities and initiatives that we want to run and deadlines would be useful to focus us on actually getting stuff completed" (prefect 1).

The notion of more direction at the start of the year was echoed by other students and both the teacher and principal. The principal took this back to lower down the school. He questioned "do we prepare the student leaders well? We have some activities in years 7-10 but we don't have a leadership programme in the school to develop leaders over their school career" (principal). A student also raised this issue, "School needs to develop a culture of leadership within the students particularly lower down the school" (former prefect 1).

"I feel we set-up our student leaders at the start of the year with regards to our expectations of them both in and out of school; however, we could probably do more around the practicalities of the role. A clearer job description perhaps, 'thou shalt do x, y z', make it nice and clear for the students" (principal). Other students discussed the concept of a teacher managing deadlines for tasks. "If we had deadlines that school gave us we would not procrastinate so much" (prefect 8). One student suggested a long term vision for the prefect group, "each year ends up just repeating the year before but trying to do it a bit better, it would be good if there was a long term vision for the prefects to work at, you could also then finish the year and see how far you

had moved the school towards the vision” (prefect 3). All these ideas suggest that the students are looking for more structure. These comments need to be discussed with the balance between structure and freedom of leadership in mind.

Other ideas for enhancement of the experience included more formal interactions with the wider community. The ideas here were for visits by the student leaders to groups such as elderly people, primary schools and representation on community committees. It was noted by the Principal that many community leadership opportunities were taken by the Duke of Edinburgh Hillary Award participants. This award does encourage a lot of leadership through its service section.

The principal and teacher in charge of student leaders were both keen on the development of assemblies. The principal acknowledged that students would probably prefer to listen to the prefects rather than listen to him speaking. “They relate more with the prefect’s experiences than mine” (principal). He had for a while hoped that a group of prefects would give assembly a shake up and introduce some new aspects but that had yet to happen. The teacher who worked with the student leaders also identified assemblies as an area that they could make some changes. One idea from the principal was a prefect assembly, where staff sat in the audience, amongst the students, rather than being up on the stage and the prefects could “organise acts, entertainment, maybe have a section where they share some of their experiences as a students at the school” (principal). It had “on many occasions over many years” (teacher 1) been suggested to the prefect group that they could make changes to the assembly format but this had never really happened. Why this was the case the teacher wasn’t sure. This reluctance to change may stem from the students perceived lack of freedom around

assembly format. Assemblies are kept very formal by the principal and although he encourages change the prefects feel that the formality would need to be maintained.

An idea that really stood out to me was that proposed by a former prefect who said “perhaps developing a year 13 leadership group, similar to the All Blacks leadership group, would engage more students. The students in this group could be in charge of organising fun stuff for year 13 to do - mufti day fancy dress, challenges against the teachers, prize giving, leavers dinner and be part of the formal committee. They could take some of the tasks away from the prefects who have too much to do, they can then focus more on the whole school issues that they should be. They could run the peer mentoring and going into year 7 and 8 classes.” (former prefect 5). This idea would alleviate some of the issues around workload and time that the interviewees identified.

Prefect 5 suggested that staff in each faculty were linked closer with the prefects responsible for their area of the school. This way there would be more than just one teacher working with the prefect group and more could be accomplished. The principal agreed that this would be a positive step however stressed the importance of ensuring that it is still student lead. The development of a group of staff who would oversee student leadership including the student council and peer mentoring was a vision of the principal. He stated “this would make coordination easier and spread the role and support for the student leaders. This group could provide feedback, coordinate opportunities and keep an eye on the leaders academic progress” (principal).

The school's house competition was referred to many times as both a weakness and potential source of more leadership opportunity. "The house competition is very poor, other schools really get into their house competition but [school] has very low level pride in house. More could be made of the house competition; I'm not sure how but the culture around it is not right. We need more people giving it a go and not caring if they stuff it up. This makes the atmosphere good as everyone can have a laugh" (non prefect 3). In observations of the house competition in action the researcher agreed with the student. When observing a lip sync competition run by the prefects, few senior students got up on stage. Those that did really lifted the 'atmosphere' and had a big impact through demonstrating how to have fun and not take themselves too seriously. The junior students responded with immense enthusiasm for the seniors who took to the stage.

4.7 Composite Narratives

"Research has found that, compared with predominantly informational methods of presentation, narratives can lead to stronger emotional reactions, greater identification with the person sharing the message, and increase engagement" (Thompson & Kreuter, 2014, p.1). This statement sums up my belief and rationale for writing the composite narratives. My close connection with the participants through the interviews and observations has provided a detailed picture of their experiences of leadership. The narratives are presented in an attempt to give the reader a feel for that connection, which cannot be derived from a thematic approach. In promoting the use of narratives in public health research, Wertz, Nosek, McNiesh & Marlow, (2011) state "this novel method is employed to re-present findings from research through first person accounts that blend the voices of the participants with those of the researcher,

emphasizing the connectedness, the 'we' among all participants, researcher, and listeners. These re-presentations allow readers to develop more embodied understandings of both the texture and structure of each of the phenomena ... to better convey the wholeness of the experience under enquiry" (p.1). Composite narratives can be described as realistic stories based on multiple narratives. Although the stories are "functionally accurate" (Thompson & Kreuter 2014, p.2) there is obviously a justification needed for their use. Sandelowski (1991) tries to justify this method of data presentation through saying "narratives with common story elements can be reasonably expected to change from telling to telling, making the idea of empirically validating them for consistency or stability completely alien to the concept of narrative truth. Misguided efforts to verify findings suggest a misplaced preoccupation with empirical rather than narrative standards of truth and a profound lack of understanding ... of the nature of storytelling" (p.165). Wertz et al. (2011) identifies what I believe to be the strength of composite narratives when she says "the composite is not a simple retelling. It is interpretation by the researcher in several important ways, through knowledge of the literature ... through listening and hearing the stories told by the informants, and through her own reflexivity during the process" (p.2). The notion of reflexivity is described by Creswell (2012) as "the researcher being aware of and openly discussing his or her role in the study in a way that honors and respects the site and participants" (p.474). The use of first person is strongly recommended by Wertz et al. (2011). They state "it indicates the composite-informant in the first person sense as someone who typifies the general experience within a living and situated context" (p.3). Another purpose of the composite narratives is as a useful resource for leadership development with young people. The idea being that students can read the three narratives and gain an understanding of what it will be like to take on a leadership role. The narratives make students aware of the emotional and social issues that they will likely come across and for warn them

about some of the tensions they will face. The following three narratives are composite students born from real life experiences of participants in this study. Each story has its own focus around the experiences of student leaders.

4.8 Alex's Story: 'leadership is about taking the initiative'

We were in assembly, the principal spoke of the importance of the student leaders in the school. He asked the current prefect group to stand up, they were on the stage, as they always are in assemblies. They looked important, all dressed up in their 'number ones', looking confident and smiling at the school looking back at them. The principal then announced he would read the names of those students selected as next year's prefects. My mate poked me in the ribs and giggled. "Would the following students please come to the stage, Eric, Mitai, Sam," the names continued, I held my breath, and then there it was, my name. A warm sensation flooded my body, people looked at me, my head seemed to swim then another poke in the ribs brought me back to earth, "get up fool" my mate whispered. I walked down to the front of the auditorium and onto the stage, conscious of not tripping on the stairs. The principal shook my hand and gave me my badge, I stood in line with the other students. "There you have it school, our new prefect team for next year". Applause. I looked up and out into the student body of the school, my heart was racing, I just wanted to be off that stage and back in my seat.

That moment was like much of what I have done as a student leader since. Both scary and exciting all in one. Being thrust from my relatively easy position as just another student into the spotlight, certainly had an effect on me.

The year started with a leadership camp. All year 13 were there but I felt there was a lot of expectation on us prefects to make our mark as the leaders. It didn't happen like that though. We all seemed to go quiet. There was an awkwardness, something felt wrong. These were my peers, my friends for the past 13 years. I was feeling like I was now different to them, I was their boss and they didn't want me. I kept an eye on the other prefects, they all seemed to be feeling the same way, they were not their usual relaxed selves. Thankfully the camp only lasted a couple of days. Nobody mentioned the weird feeling; I think we all just tried to ignore it.

The first week of school we had a prefect meeting; this was to be a regular weekly event where, along with the support teacher, we would discuss our plans and any issues. The first meeting was pretty much just being told the school's expectations on us. Looking back there was nothing there that I didn't already know. "You're a role model now, students will follow you, make sure you lead in the right way." They pushed the idea that we were prefects 24/7, even at parties on a Saturday night. That didn't worry me, I had never been a big party animal but I could tell a couple of the other prefects were not comfortable about that. Other than the role model aspect little else was said about the expectations. Our support teacher suggested that we spend some time nutting out what initiatives we wanted to run, who would be responsible for the different areas of the school and if there was anything we wanted to particularly focus on for the year. This suddenly felt real. We were leaders, we were no longer being told what to do. We had to make decisions. The discussions started cautiously but then ideas started to flow and before we knew it, we had a long list of things we wanted to do. Time ran out, the school bell rang and we all had to go to class, back to focussing on our own academic achievements. Year 13 curriculum is a step up from anything previously. In a way, they are also real. If you

want to go to university you have to achieve certain levels, if you don't, then that door closes for you.

Our first assembly came around way too quickly. I had to read a list of names of students who had received Merits, I practised the night before, reading the list out loud several times. There were two tricky names that tripped my tongue up. The morning of the assembly the prefects met in the teacher's office to check everything was in place. I practised my list once more. We all looked especially smart. Nervous laughter, checking the mute button on our phones and deep breaths to try to relax took up the last 5 minutes. The assembly passed in a flash, the sense of relief amongst us prefects was evident for the rest of the day and I think we had all grown a foot taller. Other than a "well done" from a teacher, nobody really said anything about it. Bring on next week!

I look back now and laugh at how scared I was of getting up on that stage. I used to lie in bed worrying about the moment I would have to speak to the school. Worrying about how I would sound, would people laugh at me, would I go all red and shake. But now, three terms into my leadership experience, I love getting on the stage. I enjoy the attention.

That is generally how the first term flew by. Prefect meeting, classes, assembly, more classes with regular interruptions from sports events, university visits, cultural events, teacher only days and much more. I remember thinking at some point in that hectic first term "we had better do something soon" but that's all I did, think it. It wasn't up to me to initiate something. I was part of a team and someone else will get it all going. The term 1 holidays came along. Our support teacher said a few words at our last meeting about us settling in well and how she was looking

forwards to some initiatives next term. Did I detect in her words a hint of feedback, a directive to get something done, or was I just hearing what I wanted to hear?

I sit here now in my last 8 weeks of school, not really sure what to think about my leadership experience. We have done some stuff, we organised events, made a few videos, we even started recycling in school; well kind of, we made people aware that it doesn't happen and the importance of it. We're still not sure how to actually get it happening. I reckon we did more than last year's prefects. I love hanging out with the younger students, we really made a difference there. Going into their classes during our non-contacts to help out - well some of us did. Then there was the ANZAC service, reading the list of the soldiers who didn't return from the great wars, with the whole community listening. There must have been over a thousand people there. That was probably my proudest moment. I wish we had done more in the community. I wonder if people outside the school even know that I have been a prefect.

I have certainly grown as a person over the year. My confidence has spiralled upwards. I feel like I'm a *somebody*. Younger kids say hello to me, often they know my name. They say something about one of the initiatives we have run, like "you were real funny in that video in assembly last week" or "when are you going to run the Lip Sync again, that was awesome". One year 9 kid told me that he wants to be like me when he's in Year 13; it brought a tear to my eye. It's feedback like this that makes your confidence grow.

But have we left our mark, have we made a difference? Our list from the very first prefect meeting has limited ticks on it. I think we over committed at the start. You're never going to feel like you have done enough when your list of ideas is as long as ours was. The prefect role has

so many aspects to it, too many. Trying to work with the juniors, run assemblies, organise events, promote initiatives, be a role model, listen to people, enjoy year 13 and support teachers. It's just too hard. It's like you have to be involved in everything happening at school. Then there is my academic performance. I probably put that first and leadership second or third behind my footy. We had a great year with the footy team, we really trained hard and did better at tournament than the school has ever done. Oh and I started dating this girl and got a job in the evenings. Wow, when I say it like that it's been one hell of a busy year!

Is the school pleased with us and what we have achieved? I don't know, the teachers and principal haven't really said anything. I get the impression that they expected us to do more, but they didn't push or tell us. It's frustrating not getting feedback. Not knowing if people think you're doing a good job. Some of us prefects wanted to get more done but having only one meeting a week and people sometimes not being there meant we didn't get some stuff started. It comes down to initiative. I should have taken the initiative at the end of term 1, I should have said "hey team, let's get this first idea ticked off over the holidays". That way there would have been some urgency. Trouble is not all prefects would have committed to doing it in the holidays, some were away playing sport or working. Maybe our support teacher could have given us deadlines or told us that we had to do three initiatives per term or something like that. School has really left it up to us, "that's leadership" we're told. I'm keen to do something in these last few weeks. One last event - something to make an impact. Whether we will get it organised in time with exams looming, who knows?

I would really like to have some more leadership experience. Perhaps I will get involved in my Hall of residence at University or the student union. I think I will eventually have a job where I

lead others. It's a buzz, leading, being known, being challenged, being respected, and growing as a person.

4.9 Jess' story: leadership is about being yourself

We are in assembly, the Principal is speaking about the importance of the student leaders at the school. He asked the current prefect group to stand up; they are on the stage, as always in assemblies. They look important, all dressed up in their number ones, looking confident and smiling at the school looking back at them. The principal then announces he will now read the names of those students selected as next year's prefects. Even though I'm fairly confident I have been selected, my heart is beating so fast that I am struggling to focus on what he is saying. All my friends say that I'll be head girl; even some teachers have said that to me. I've taken a lot of leadership opportunities over my time at this school. I was a junior house leader, organised the 40 hour famine, I am on the student council, I co-directed the school production, I lead my Venture scouts and I coach Netball. As well as all this I am working towards my gold Duke of Edinburgh Hillary Award. Why do I do all this? Because I love it. It started when I was young, I'd always be the friend to the new kid or the bully victim. I get a kick from helping. teachers have picked up on this; I regularly get requests to help with all sorts of events. The other day my old primary school principal phoned me up asking if I would be able to help run a fundraising quiz at the school. Some of my peers think I suck up to teachers, I don't, I just work hard, take opportunities and I don't worry about what other people think or say. I also have my role models, my idols, past head students who I try to emulate.

The Principal puts on his glasses and pulls out his list. Silence. There are lots of people in my year group who could be prefects. There are some people I'm not overly keen on working with, but right now I'd work with anybody, just please, please read my name, it's my destiny!

"Eric, Mitai, Sam, Alex, Jess", yippee, that's me. The girl sat beside me rolls her eyes, "no surprises there then" she says. I can only guess what she's thinking but as with many other occasions in my life, I decide not to care. We don't even know each other. What does matter, I remind myself, is that the students and staff of this school think I'm worthy of being their leader. I feel humbled. I walk to the stage and shake hands with the principal, he hands me my badge and it's like being given a dollar coin when you're really young. I just want to wrap my hands around it and run off to hide it somewhere before anyone can take it from me. I manage to control my emotions for the rest of the assembly, but I can't hide the smile that feels permanently fixed to my face.

After the assembly my friends crowd round to congratulate me, they are all super excited, almost as much as I am. We all drive together for a coffee and I revel in the warmth and support my friends are showing. This feels good.

The leadership camp happens as soon as we are back at school. It is a good camp, all year 13s work together doing fun problem solving activities and getting to know each other a little better. The principal comes along to talk to us about leadership. He lists the qualities we should show and a few that we should not. He reminds us that we as the senior students, are the face of the school. All this is easy, I already do it. It's who I am. During the camp I try not to take over, I listen rather than speak, not wanting to come across too bossy. The other prefects act in

the same way. Towards the end of the camp, the Dean identifies some more leadership roles that need to be filled by the year group. I seize the opportunity to ask the year group if anyone wants to work with me on an initiative to get recycling happening at school. No one raises their hand. Even my friends sit and look at the floor avoiding eye contact. It's a little embarrassing but the Dean steps in and gives the year group a lecture about supporting one another. After this a couple of girls volunteer to help, it doesn't feel genuine though.

During our camp, one girl in particular appears to have lots of influence within the group. She wasn't selected as a prefect but she is confident, funny, pretty and immediately gains the respect of her peers. She uses humor and an engaging voice. She quickly puts people in their place if they act silly and she makes fast decisions. Her team does well, in fact they win the amazing race. She has the year group on her side, she has gained their respect.

That night in bed, whilst wondering what we, as a prefect group, would decide to do first, I think about the girl who commanded everybody's attention. Her name is Marama, she told us it means moonlight in Te Reo Maori. It suddenly strikes me that perhaps I'm not all the leader that I tell myself I am. I mean, who follows me? I don't have heaps of friends, I'm not overly confident when speaking with boys, I'm not in the Senior A Netball team, I can't sing and I'm certainly not in line for the comedian of the year award. Comparing myself to Miss Moonlight allows self doubt to raise its ugly head. I've been here before. Ok, what was it my Mum told me, positive self talk, head up high, look people in the eye and follow your heart rather than other people. I fall asleep still worrying. Dreams of humiliation in assembly, disrespect in the playground and teachers mocking my recycling in class, haunt my sleep.

We've been school leaders now for 1 term. It's been pretty much as I expected. Last year's prefects gave us a good picture of the role, however, I'm not sure if I'm doing the right thing, if I am actually leading. You see, I've been thinking about leadership. I'm starting to wonder if what I actually do is leadership at all. My strengths seem to be in caring for people. I connect with the outliers in the junior school, the alternative kids who don't quite fit or haven't got many friends. I sit with and listen to them. In prefect meetings I suggest ideas but I'm over just coming up with ideas, I want to do something. I work hard, I give the role lots of my time and energy, but when you look at many of the great leaders, they are all super charismatic, they lead through inspiring people with articulate speeches and acts of courage and bucket loads of personality. That's just not me. I am no hero, nor am I cool or a sports team captain. I'm not sure that I inspire or motivate people, I just seem to get things done, does that count as leadership?

A few weeks pass, we get to the end of the first term and the teacher we work with says she is pleased with how we have settled in. She also hopes that we will spring into action at the start of next term. I stay back after the meeting and share what has been on my mind most of the term. What does the school want from us, I ask. The teacher looks quizzically at me. I go on, I don't feel like I'm leading. I feel like all I've done is develop relationships with people, particularly younger kids. I feel like I'm just a student who behaves well, says the right things and sits on the stage during assembly. Not like Marama, the students think she is great, she oozes personality and confidence and she is not even a prefect. My recycling idea has staggered to a halt, and my friends seem distant. What can I do? The teacher tells me she thinks I'm doing a wonderful job. She explains the concept of leadership styles. She goes on saying every leader is different. They focus on their strengths and areas of interest. Some

leaders are charismatic, they are able to motivate and inspire but others are doers, they take the initiative, they move ideas into actions. She talks about servant leadership and the philosophy behind it. Caring for people listening, she says, is a large part of leadership. This makes me feel better, I rationalise in my head that each of us prefects are using our strengths to make things happen. A couple of the prefects are motivators, inspiring the school with humor and coolness, others are the initiators - that's me, I make things happen.

With 8 weeks of school to go I am looking to my future. It's been an awesome year; once I became comfortable with my role I really got stuck in. I found the more I did the more I wanted to do. I ended up initiating most of our actions. The other prefects look to me to get the ball rolling. They asked me to chair the prefect meetings as sometimes we talked too much and never got to a decision. I really feel like this experience has been a massive benefit to me as a person. Whatever I do next, and I'm considering a year volunteering before heading to University, I think that the leadership skills and experience will be valuable. The improvements in my confidence, being able to work with other people who are not necessarily my friends and relating to all ages of people, will be useful in many jobs. I can see myself in the future chairing a board meeting with a group of other business executives, making decisions, just like we did as prefects.

It's the last day of school, we're sat in assembly and the principal is talking about the importance of student leaders. He announces that he will now read the names of next year's prefects. I look out from the stage at the school looking back at me, and remember what it felt like, sat there nervously praying for your name to be called. I also consider those students who know full well it's not going to be them. I wonder what they are feeling like. Will there will be

disappointment, how would I have taken that, would it feel like rejection? Perhaps some of us are destined to become leaders, or is it just our good luck that we put our hands up at the right time back in year 9?

4.10 Tane's story: those who miss out

We were in assembly, the Principal spoke of the importance of the student leaders for the school. He asked the current prefect group to stand up; they were on the stage as they always are in assemblies. They looked important, all dressed up in their number ones, looking confident and smiling at the school looking back at them. The principal then announced he would read the names of those students selected as next year's prefects. My mate poked me in the ribs and giggled. "Would the following students please come to the stage, Eric, Mitai, Tessa, Alex". The names continued, I held my breath, he finished. "There you have it school, our new prefect team for next year". Applause. A chill flooded my body; I felt like people were looking at me, they were not. They were all looking at those on the stage. I'm sure that I physically shrank in size right there in my seat, in that auditorium. I looked down at the floor, deflated. My heart was racing. I just wanted to be out of there. A poke in the ribs, "bet you're glad you're not up there eh!" I just nodded, gave a weak smile and said nothing.

I went home that afternoon, truanted last lesson. I was angry, disappointed and relieved, all in one, it was a strange emotion. I needed time. Nobody had said anything to me after the assembly. What could they say, everyone thought that I might have been head boy, at least a prefect. Even some teachers had complimented me on my leadership, told me how I'd be a

great leader for the school. But no, it wasn't to be. How did Alex get up there? He hasn't done hardly any leadership before, he wasn't even a Junior House Leader. I've worked throughout year 12 mentoring the younger kids, I get more respect from them than many of the teachers. What about me being captain of the First XV, leading the Kapa Haka group. Perhaps it's my past behaviour catching up with me. Maybe when I swore at Mrs Smith in Year 9 she's held a grudge. Setting the gas tap on fire in Mr Jones' Year 9 Science doesn't seem funny anymore. But I've changed, a lot. School wasn't quite so dismissive of me when they needed someone to stop those boys fighting at lunchtime. They were all good with me taking that form class for a game of pirates when the teacher went home sick. The "best PE lesson they had ever had" they told me. Hell, school even sent me on an Outward Bound course, they said I showed real leadership ability.

But then again, did I really want to stand up on that stage and have to act like a perfect prefect. There is definitely a sense of relief mixed in with my emotions. Prefects try to become someone else. The power goes to their head. Just because they wear a badge doesn't make them any better, they are still just students like us. I'd like to see them take on the naughty kids and make a difference. I enjoyed working with them last year, but how can I do it again. I don't want to be stepping on the prefects' toes, it's kind of their job now. Perhaps school will ask me to do something specific, some other kind of leadership role. I'm not going to put my hand up for anything; I will look stupid if I don't get that role. I suppose I can focus on my studies, or play more sport. I doubt whether I would have had the time to be a prefect, what with working and sport and everything else, it's quite a commitment. But hey, well done to those guys who got chosen. They are all good people. Alex, my mate, he's worked hard with his studies and impressed the teachers. He even started playing footy last year, I'm sure it was just to be more

involved in school life. I'll say well done and wish them all the best for the year. That will make it less awkward in the common room.

So here we are, 8 weeks of school to go then it's all over. Wow, 13 years of my life, ending. I'm pretty stoked that I've almost got enough credits to pass the year. I also have myself an apprenticeship once I leave. I think I will miss this place. Who would have ever thought I'd still be here. It's probably because of my leadership stuff that I am still here. It's funny looking back now at how I felt at the start of the year, all despondent about not being a prefect. The leadership camp we did was awkward, it seemed like there was a division forming in our year group. You could tell the prefects felt uncomfortable. They were quiet, like they didn't know how to behave. When they did speak you could sense some resentment in the room. One of the prefects asked if anyone wanted to work with her on a recycling initiative. Nobody put up their hands, it was embarrassing. Even her friends looked at the floor. Everyone was thinking, you got the job, you do the work, we'll leave it to you. Eventually, after a lecture from our Dean about supporting the prefect group, a couple of girls agreed to help, reluctantly. Alex was one of the sports prefects. I thought he might ask me to help him set up some lunchtime sports events but he didn't. Not sure why, perhaps he was afraid of acting like my boss or something.

During the year I did start working with those junior kids again. I didn't do as much as last year but I was helping one young boy in particular. I kept it on the low down, I didn't want to be seen to be trying to be a prefect when I wasn't. They all wore their badges; it was their job to do those things. I did it because it felt right not because I was obligated to do it. A few of us non prefects got together to organise a fancy dress day for year 13, we did it without any prefects. They took offense to that, but they were so busy with their meetings and running initiatives.

When we were organising the formal, there were a couple of prefects on the committee and they pretty much took over. The prefects have all the power and attention. It's like they feel like they have to be involved in everything, and then they take over.

Alex is way more confident in assembly. The prefects had a voice coach come in to work with them. Alex says he now enjoys speaking in assembly. He was quite funny in that video they made, he's never really been funny before. All the prefects appear to be growing as people. I sometimes think I'm being left behind. It feels a little unfair. They get plenty of opportunity to practice public speaking, organising events, work with teachers and they also get asked to represent the school at a lot of events. Teachers turn to them when they need some help. I'm leading the Kapa Haka ³ group and didn't even get asked to organise the powhiri⁴ for the sports exchange. Our Dean said at the start of the year that there would be heaps of chances to get involved in leadership. I haven't seen many yet. I was asked if I wanted to be a house leader and I said yes but we've not done much. Some of the other house leaders can't be bothered. The teacher running the competition tries to get us to organise events but people are not motivated. I love standing up in house meetings, getting to inspire the younger students is a good feeling. The prefects organised a Lip Sync competition and that turned into a house event. They have even taken that over. I think there should be clear job description so that prefects know what they have to do, then leave everything else up to the rest of year 13. There are lots of us who would really like to get stuck in to leading. We have a lot to offer the school but we don't get asked. I think our talents are being wasted.

³ Kapa Haka is the Maori term for performing arts, usually song and dance.

⁴ Powhiri is a Maori welcoming ceremony often including speeches, song, dance and food

In my physical education class we learnt about collaborative leadership . The prefects reckon that this year they are a collaborative group. I'm not sure, I think real collaboration would be all year 13 working together on initiatives. I don't like the fact that the prefects are seen as being above the rest of the year group. I think all year 13 students should be equal. There have been a few petty arguments and fallouts due to the sense of entitlement from some prefects. It has been uncomfortable in the common room on occasion. I think we would all be more supportive and closer if we didn't have a prefect group. Maybe just a head boy and girl and then all year 13 can be like prefects. This way there would be heaps more getting done. Imagine if all 60 of us were leading activities or working with junior kids. The school would be alive, there would be lots of good stuff happening. We could all grow as people whilst helping others, not just selfishly focussing on our studies. Perhaps if you do a good job you could be awarded a prefect badge at the end of the year, wouldn't that be sweet, we would all have a chance at adding 'prefect' to our CV. My future will certainly involve leadership roles, if only as captain of my rugby team. Once I'm away from school, my past mistakes will not be holding me back.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Outline

This chapter will discuss the findings of the research. Initially the benefits that students gain from leadership will be examined and the findings of this study compared to others. Secondly issues around the student leadership role will be discussed. The implications section will cover ideas and strategies for development of the student leadership role. The discussion will focus on the research questions posed at the start of this study, namely;

What are the perceived benefits of student leadership to the individual and schools?

Do student leaders value the experiences?

Should the benefits of student leadership be available to more senior students?

How can the roles of student leaders be made more effective?

5.2 The case for increased opportunity

In this section the arguments in support of student leadership in schools will be discussed. The research questions “what are the benefits of student leadership in schools” and “do student leaders value the experience” will inform the discussion. The whole rationale for this study was to question the inequality of offering only a select few students opportunities that are of educational value. In order to pose this question, evidence of the value that leadership opportunities provides needs to be established. Thus the first stage of the research was to ascertain if, in fact, the concept of student leadership was a worthwhile experience. Anecdotal evidence from the researcher’s background had suggested that this would be the case, however

it was felt that to assume this without first speaking to the students who have experienced leadership would question the validity of the evidence. The title of the study, Leadership for All, is a pointer to the next stage whereby, if student leadership can be justified as a worthy concept, the question of inequality of opportunity arises. If we as educators know that something is beneficial to our students, it is not fair to offer these experiences to a select few, rather than to all students?

The findings of this study are that there are a multitude of benefits to be derived by students experiencing leadership in school. These findings echo several other authors who report that there are many personal advantages for students involvement with leadership positions in the school (Hine, 2011; Myers, 2005; Dempster, Neumann & Skinner, 2009, Lavery, 2006). Others studies have identified the development of positive culture, service and students giving back, as benefits to the school (Gearhart & Lineburg, 2008; McNea, 2011).

Schuh & Shertzer (2004) summed up the experiences of students saying “no one felt an obligation to serve as a student leader; they made purposeful choices to get involved on their own, and none of the student leaders displayed any feelings of regret. For them, involvement has been an extremely positive experience” (p.122). Being aware of what these benefits are will help schools develop effective student leadership opportunities. The specific benefits confidence, experience of responsibility, working collaboratively, being a role model and benefits related to future career will now be discussed.

5.2.1 Improvements in confidence

In every interview and without hesitation, the initial benefit that student leaders identified was increased confidence. This echoes the findings from Lavey & Neidhart (2003) who stated “students identified advantages associated with leadership activities, in particular, personal benefits such as self esteem, confidence and maturity” (p.3). When pushed to be specific, the students mainly focussed on self-belief. “I am more willing to put my hand up for things; before I became a prefect I didn't think I was good enough to do leadership type stuff” (prefect 8). The self-belief that many of the students gained merely from being selected, was evident in many interviews. “The very next day after I was told I would be a prefect I felt way more confident, even just walking round school” (prefect 8). The students who are selected as prefects are essentially in a self fulfilling cycle around their confidence. This phenomenon is explained by Gladwell (2008) who says that once a person has demonstrated ability in an area, they get increased support, resourcing, external interest and expectation. These additional benefits allow the person to further succeed thus creating a self affirming cycle.

In their 2009 study, examining the impact of positional leadership on secondary school student leaders, Neumann, Dempster & Skinner identify self confidence as the major benefits. They stated “students identified public speaking, improvising when confronted with unexpected situations, dealing with unknown people, and developing interpersonal skills as important indicators of enhanced self confidence” (Neumann, Dempster & Skinner 2009 p.10). Steve Freeborn (2000), presented his article “School Captains: school and community expectations” at a student leadership conference in New South Wales. He stated “alongside the academic curriculum, student leadership programmes provide a powerful connection to positive self esteem, connection with the school’s history, future role models and representation of a school’s core business of student growth from childhood to adulthood” (p.18). The case study school

principal echoed these thoughts, He stated “it broadens them as people” as the main benefit for student leaders. He describes this as taking on challenges, displaying self confidence, having a growth mindset and being able to relate to a wide range of people (Principal).

In their research, Schuh & Shertzer (2004) interviewed both successful student leaders and disengaged students at an American University. They found that confidence was discussed by both successful and disengaged students. Whilst the successful student leaders identified confidence as a personal trait, the disengaged associated a lack of confidence as a barrier to even *applying* to become a leader. They then posed the question, where did the student leader’s confidence come from? “The student leaders felt quite empowered, and extremely confident in themselves. They had support from others, had a breadth of opportunities available to them, and came from a background and environment that helped them build their confidence” (Schuh & Shertzer 2004 p.126). Self-confidence, it appears, is a major influence in student access to leadership opportunities. Whether the student feels confident, or is perceived by others to be confident, can dictate whether leadership positions come their way. Ironically, previous leadership experience is often a significant contributor to developing that confidence.

5.2.2 Experience of responsibility

‘Experiencing responsibility’ was identified by the teacher working with the prefects as a major influence in their personal development. She stated “as prefects they start to understand responsibility”, she goes on to explain how she has seen many students step up to the challenge. Some students who could potentially have been negative or disruptive influences on their peers, take on board the responsibility and expectations, their whole attitude changes significantly. If they can sustain this throughout the year then both they, and the school reap the

benefits (teacher 1). Rising to the challenge of responsibility and expectations was identified in a study based on 378 Chinese secondary students. Anderson & Lu randomly assigned classroom leadership positions to students. They tracked the students for 22 weeks collecting data on test scores, opinions and social networks. Their results showed above average improvements in the leadership students test scores, increased confidence and a perceived increase in social networks. They suggest that the improved test scores could be caused by the Rosenthal effect, the increase in an individual's attainment caused by increased expectations from others. The Rosenthal effect could also be used to explain the reported improvements in attitude of some student leaders from the case study school. In their summary Anderson & Lu state "our study demonstrates that leadership service is not simply a signal of skills or popularity - it can have meaningful effects on students" (p.3). Galambos, Tilton-Weaver & Vitunski (2001), through their research on maturity development, state that "adolescents themselves commonly acknowledge that maturity comes from responsibility, power and status, balance and privileges, and that maturity is demonstrated through competence at individual, interpersonal and societal levels" (p.154). The evidence from this study, although not explicit, suggests that both student leaders and non-leaders are aware of the development in maturity that student leadership brings.

5.2.3 Being a role model

The case study school places a lot of emphasis on the role model aspect of student leaders. The expectations on the student leader's behaviour, attitude and work ethic are set explicitly at the start of the year, interestingly the same expectations are not given to the rest of the cohort. This tension will be examined later. Gearheart and Lineburg (2008) claim "when students are given leadership roles, they become positive role models, especially for younger students" (p.2).

The school, via the teacher in charge of the prefects and the principal, sees a peer mentoring role as particularly important for the prefects. Alongside the role model aspect the prefects are asked at the start of the year if they can aim to make connections with the junior students, particularly with those who are struggling. “We have really connected with the younger students, playing hustle, hanging out with them at break, being in classes with them; I think we have really made a difference with that year group” (prefect 6). “Many people don’t see all the work we do. Everyday we [the prefect group] hang out with the younger kids, doing duty” (prefect 5). There were many comments about the pleasure and satisfaction that the prefects derive from this work. Other studies have also identified the positive relationships that student leaders develop with the younger students (Lavery 2006; Freeborn, 2000; Lilly 2010; Andrews & Keeffe, 2011). Natta Cartwright, a school counsellor with over 20 years experience running Peer support programmes in 35 schools, gives a clue as to why the student leaders enjoy working with younger students. She states “by learning co-counselling, people learn how to rediscover their natural ability to give and get good attention from one another through basic listening skills” (Cartwright 2005 p.45).

5.2.4 Working collaboratively

Developing the ability to work collaboratively was the second most identified benefit of the student leadership experience. Roach et al (1999) investigated contemporary views of leadership amongst young people comparing them to the opinions of adults. Their 10 year study showed “views of leadership found in youth-based organizations and recounted as highly general among their peers contrast sharply with adult models of a single leader with identifiable traits” (p.16). They identify collaboration and group based leadership as being the preferred option with young people. This has also been found to be the case by Merrill Associates (as

cited in Dempster & Lizzio 2007) who have noted a shift in leadership styles by generation X and Y away from the heroic ideas of leadership towards leaders who can work alongside their followers, as allies. These findings were supported by the results of this study in which there was a general consensus that the collaborative style of leadership worked well for the prefects. Only one of the interviewees questioned the team approach to leadership that the school promotes. This student was not a prefect but had house leader's responsibilities. The student was unhappy about the commitment of their peers and thus would have preferred to lead as an individual. The fact that all the prefects saw leading as a team in a positive light suggests that these students reflect Roach et al.'s work by no longer viewing leadership as autocratic. Although not specifically identified in the research due to anonymity reasons, all the head boy and head girl prefects identified themselves as prefects first and foremost. None of them showed any desire to be an autocratic leader or had elitist feelings towards the other prefects. Within this study the students interviewed valued the team approach to leadership. "We all [prefects] work as part of one team, we see each other as equals" (prefect 5). The prefect group's ability to recognise the advantages of a collaborative approach was evident during discussions. "We're good at working collaboratively, each of us is responsible for our own area [sport, culture, environment, academic] but we all support each other at the same time. We are all fully committed to each thing [initiative] even if we're not responsible for that area" (prefect 7). Lavery (2006) believes that student leaders "experience a sense of empowerment, responsibility and respect for others through collaboration" (p.28)

5.2.5 Future life benefits

The interviewees were able to articulate how they thought the skills they had developed working as a leadership team would transfer into their working lives. "I can now imagine myself sat

around the boardroom of a company working with other people to make decisions for the company, its just like we worked as a prefect team” (prefect 4). Kuhn & Weinberger (2005) provide evidence that this is not just a perceived benefit. In their research looking into leadership skills and wages they state that “at least some component of leadership skill is fostered by occupying leadership positions during high school. This may help explain the intensive recent efforts of many parents, schools, and businesses to involve students and employees in leadership-development activities” (p.431). They quantify their findings saying “high school leaders are more likely to occupy managerial occupations as adults, and leadership skills command a higher wage premium within managerial occupations than elsewhere. The pure leadership-wage effect varies, depending on definitions and time period, from 4% to 33%” (Kuhn & Weinberger 2005 p.1). Leadership experience and employability was a link that some of the student leaders in this study identified as a benefit. “Putting it on your CV is obviously going to help” (prefect 6). The fact that some students didn’t think of this benefit demonstrates that their reasons for accepting the role were generally altruistic.

Both this study and previous investigations have reported other benefits of student leadership in schools including improvements in: organisational skills, public speaking, using initiative, communication, school pride, interpersonal skills, relating to others and time management. (Lavey 2006, Hine 2013). Gearheart & Lineburg (2008) sum up the benefits of student leadership saying “without question facilitating student leadership dictates a positive school climate that permeates through the entire school community” (p.40).

5.3 Tensions in student leadership

In this section the tensions rised during the interviews and observations will be discussed.

There has been limited discussion within the literature on student leadership around tensions.

In his longitudinal case study into student leadership at an Australian school Gregory Hine (2013) stated “a majority of students ([leaders] consistently and vociferously insisted that there were no negative experiences associated with student leadership at the college” (p.46). Schuh & Shertzer (2004) take an opposing standpoint. Their study purposefully investigated the constraints that students perceive around access to student leadership roles. They identified lack of opportunity, lack of confidence and lack of capabilities were barriers to disengaged students accessing leadership positions. Lavey & Neidhart (2003) also found students had concerns about leadership. They identify the stress of added responsibility, balancing leadership with study, pressure of being a role model ‘all the time’, leadership selection being a popularity contest, and the risk of isolation from peers, as common concerns raised by the students. These findings are reflected in this study and will be explored further in the coming paragraphs.

5.3.1 The nature of leadership and the school’s expectations

Hidden within the responses of the student leaders in this study is evidence of confusion about the nature of leadership. “I thought there would be more specific activities that I would have to be involved with. Most of the role was just setting a good example, leading by example, which is just being yourself so not much extra work” (former prefect 2).

“Was I leading? I’m not really sure, I was always leading by example, however, little in the way of organising or making decisions was asked of me. So in one way I was just doing what I had been asked to do, represent the school in a positive way and show people how to be good” (former prefect 4). Tension around whether the things the student leaders are doing is leadership or not, appears, as in Jess’ story, to cause student leaders to question their role. McNae (2011) found similar misunderstandings. “Most of the young women [interviewees] viewed leadership as completing tasks to help with the smooth functioning of the school” (p.39). Schuh & Shertzer (2004) put forward an interesting suggestion “a student’s definition of leadership may play a significant role in whether or not the student perceives him/herself as a leader” (p.112). In my study when talking about their success in a leadership role, students were inclined to focus on organising and running events. The researcher often had to explicitly ask about the mentoring role the prefect group had with the junior students, for them to consider these interactions as leadership. As discussed in the benefits section above, once they were thinking in this way it quickly became clear that building relationships with the younger students was a particular focus of the group and an area where they had seen success. The research done in Australian Catholic schools (Lavey, 2006; Lavery & Neidhart, 2003; Hine, 2012; McNae, 2011) suggests that students in Catholic schools had a more comprehensive understanding of leadership. 90% of Lavery & Neidhart’s year 12 sample, N=368, believed they actually exercised leadership. “The principle means by which the students perceived they exercised leadership was by adopting a positive image of their school, acting as role models, setting a good example, interacting with younger students, and by representing their school in the wider community” (Lavery & Neidhart 2003 p.4). This difference in the level of understanding of what leadership is could be due to the character of Catholic schools’. Treston (1994) refers to leadership in Catholic schools as being congruent with christian leadership ideals. In essence,

the school is the major influencer in a students understanding of leadership. McNae suggests another reason that tension and confusion around the nature of leadership exists. In her case study McNae (2011) found that “the [case study] school was attempting to instill values and beliefs about leadership yet the structure they provided to do this did not allow access to the desired benefits by which the students were motivated. This incongruous practice created a leadership purpose dissonance between the school and the students” (p.44). The research around collegial and distributed leadership structures, discussed earlier in the literature review, pointed strongly to a shared vision being a major determinant of success. It is of no surprise then that the findings of this, and other studies, associate acceptance and understanding of the school’s vision and values with successful student leadership experiences.

The work of Fertman and van Lindman (1999) provides an interesting perspective on the tension concerning the nature of leadership. Their work may help explain why different students from similar backgrounds (school, socio economic, cultural) have different conceptions of leadership. They suggest that leadership development in adolescents is a three stage process; awareness, interaction, and mastery. In the first stage “adolescents tend not to perceive themselves as leaders and need help to begin identifying and building on their leadership potential” (p.12). They also argue that “all middle and high school students have leadership potential. They exhibit their abilities in many ways and a variety of situations every day” (Fertman & van Lindman, 1999, p.11). Senior students who have previously held leadership roles may already be at stage 2, they are conscious of their skills and already view themselves as leaders. Those who have not had explicit leadership opportunities are still at stage 1, unaware of their leadership capacity. They do not see themselves as leaders and are therefore less likely to put themselves forward for leadership positions. The sudden increase in

confidence that prefects talked about on appointment to the position, may be explained by this model. At the point of election the students instantly moves from stage 1 to stage 2, suddenly becoming conscious of their capacity to lead. Those student who do not get selected, need further support in order to progress into stage 2. This second stage also has its pitfalls. The student leaders in the case study school often reported being disappointed at the amount that they had achieved as leaders. They identified a lack of time, or too much to do, as causes of this perceived failure. Fertman & van Lindman suggest that at stage 2 “the involvement [in leadership] can be overwhelming and produce frustration, particularly if an adolescent defines leadership in traditional terms of formal organisation membership and activity participation” (p.13). Once again, this brings the focus back to the idea that the school must be clear on its paradigm for student leadership, ensuring that the students and staff understand it. As Fertman & van Lindman (1999) put it “we need to make the concept of leadership concrete, so they can grasp it, get their hands around it, mold it to their lives” (p.13). I believe that the school’s leadership and staff need to align the structure and expectations of student leadership with the values and vision of the school. Essentially, a change in paradigm from that of student leadership being for a select, elite group of prefects, to leadership being expected from all senior students.

Across all the interviews conducted for this study, issues with expectations were the main cause of tension. This has been mentioned by both students and staff and was observed by the researcher. Expectations set the tone and the standards expected whilst also providing a basis from which the student leaders can make their own decisions. Expectations are the main tool for sharing the school's ideology of student leadership.

From the interviews it is clear that the start of the year is a very important time to set the expectations for the student leaders. As identified previously the school must have in place a sound ideology around the purpose and structure of student leadership, and be able to communicate this to the student leaders. The teacher and principal in this study had a clear vision for the prefect group “the prefects are our role models first, they show other students how things should be done” (Principal). Although the student leaders generally understood the types of tasks they would be required to do, they were often unsure about the purpose of their role. “There was a good tie between the previous prefects and us, they told us pretty much what things would do during the year” (prefect 2). “I often question whether I am representing the school in the right way” (prefect 6). “We need a succinct long term vision for the prefects, each group seems to go in a different direction” (prefect 3). The concept of student leaders being first and foremost a role model, is well understood by the students. A lot is made of the students maintaining their own personal academic and behavioural standards and all students referred to it in their interviews. “It’s always in the back of your mind that you are a role model” (prefect 3). We have to “act like prefects all the time, even out of school” (prefect 8), people are always watching, judging how you act” (prefect 6). Explicitly setting high expectations in this way has a significant impact on some students. The teacher in charge of the prefects explained “the leaders quickly begin to appreciate the responsibility given to them by the voters (pupils & staff), not wanting to let those people down. “A couple of prefects this year have stepped up to this expectation, they had the potential to be disruptive and negative influences on the year group but they have really risen to the position” (teacher 1). This knowledge poses the question of equality. If a school is aware that students benefit from the expectations and pressure put on them as leaders, then ethically, shouldn’t the other students in that year be given the same opportunities. At the start of the year the principal tells all year 13 students that, being the

eldest, they are the leaders of the school and that younger students look up to them. He suggests that they have a responsibility to behave in a positive way (principle). This message does not appear to have much effect on those students. None of the non prefect students interviewed mentioned feeling any pressure to behave in a certain way. In fact some suggested that they actively stepped away from leadership type behaviours in school activities, focussing, as with Tane's story on their studies or life outside of school. Observations of non prefects in their general school life did not reveal any evidence of them being leaders around the school. Although there was a noted difference in the maturity level of the year 13 to the year 12's during non-class time, few non prefects showed any leadership type interactions with junior school students.

The expectations of both the school and the students appear to be different for prefects as opposed to year 13 students. Having been labeled a leader students appear to expect more from themselves. This in conjunction with the increase in the schools expectation creates a tension. Dempster, Neumann and Skinner (2009) pick up on this point, "It is common for schools to expect much more of their school captains than of other students" (p.3). This goes against the direction of the New Zealand curriculum, it states "research shows a strong correlation between teacher expectations and student outcomes. If teachers have high expectations for all students, then all students are likely to be challenged and extended, leading to positive learning outcomes for all (NZ Curriculum online 2017).

5.3.2 Relationships with peers

A student's experience of designated leadership always starts with the selection process. Within the composite stories Alex, Jess and Tane all struggled with conflicting emotions at the

point of selection. This issue was raised many times during the interviews, with one stating “I would love to find a way to remove the tension at the start of the year when the prefect group is announced” (prefect 7).

The feelings of success or failure, acceptance or exclusion are destined to bring tension into a year group of teenagers. The strong emotional response is an indication of the importance that students, families and the community place on these roles. The relationships between prefects and non-prefects can become strained from this point on. Dempster & Lizzio (2007) purport “the unifying meta-theme for young people appears to be that relationships matter more than institutions” (p.278). Although it is acknowledged that this comment was made in relation to generational attitudes towards leadership in society, rather than to a specific institution, the findings from this investigation suggest otherwise. Students appeared to ‘buy in’ to the values and vision of the school, sometimes resulting in changes in friendships. “Having students in leadership roles can create quite a divide; certain personalities within the year [13] group seem to have an issue with leadership groups” (prefect 2).

This sentiment was quite common amongst the interviewees.

“They [non-prefects] seem to think we prefects have to do everything, they pull their noses when we try to ask them to help. They seem to think that because we got selected they don’t have to do anything” (prefect 3).

“I tried to delegate by asking some year 13 friends if they wanted to run the [annual initiative] committee, they said yes but then nothing got done and now it feels too late in the year to get it going, it’s annoying because it makes me look lazy” (prefect 8).

Dempster, Neumann & Skinner (2009) agreed with these findings, stating “generally the school captains in the study found a change in relationships with peers” (p.6), with females reporting this to be a concern more than males. The girls identified, exclusion from peer activities, both in

school and socially, name calling, negative comments and lack of support when the leader needed it as negative impacts on their friendships. Archard (2011) also investigating student leadership in a girls' school reported a conflict between leadership roles and social position, suggesting that although the students wider friendship group was enhanced by appointment to a leadership position their closer friendship group was a barrier to development as a leader. This point was raised by one interviewee in this study. She discussed her frustrations when her close friends "referred to her by [her leadership title] rather than by her name" (prefect 1) and treated her differently once she had been selected as a student leader. Although it is unclear whether the overwhelming focus on the prefect role, or the perceived lack of other leadership opportunities, causes this tension, the evidence that it exists is unequivocal. It is this study's suggestion that changing the structure of student leadership at the case study school will alleviate at least some of the interpersonal tensions that student leadership currently causes.

5.3.3 Leadership structure and disempowerment

The actual point of selection can have a significant impact on the students' experience of their final year in school. As with Tane, many students who are not selected for a leadership role feel disempowered, frustrated and even angry that others were chosen ahead of themselves. The interviews with students who were not selected as prefects highlighted that some, like Tama, withdrew from involvement in leadership roles. "I decided to focus on my studies and [sport] instead" (non prefect 2). There was a very clear "it's the prefects' role" attitude amongst the non-prefects interviewed. This was not, in most cases resentful, more the student not wanting to tread on toes.

The majority of schools still cling to a hierarchical model for student leadership (Leo 2006; Anderson 2016; Dempster & Lizzio 2007). Tradition can be a significant barrier to progress, in transforming student leadership from the Eton school model to a more contemporary structure. Leo (2006) acknowledged “we would have to concede that this [structural change] has not hitherto been well understood by our community” (p.26). In the case study school, prefects are promoted as the school leaders, with a headboy and headgirl selected as the top of the tree. Students are then asked to follow them. This limited position hierarchical model does not appear to match the school’s vision, ‘the best I can be’. A more inclusive structure (discussed in the implications section), as with those suggested by Leo (2006) and Lavery & Neidhart (2003) could be a significant step forward in reducing disempowerment amongst non prefects and allowing more students to be the ‘best I can be’. There is an irony in that this research suggests through selecting positional leaders, the school is unknowingly disempowering some year 13 students.

Many authors identify a lack of opportunity as a major barrier for the development of student leadership capacity (Appleton, 2002; Fertmann & van Linden, 1999; Gearhart & Lineberg, 2008; Anderson, 2016; Dempster & lizzio, 2007) to identify but a few. The case study school places a lot of emphasis on prefects having authentic leadership experiences. They have freedom to lead as they choose, there appears to be nothing off limits to the prefects. This freedom limits opportunities for other students who may want to get involved in leadership. Peer mentoring, assemblies, cultural, sporting, student voice, environmental and academic issues are all ‘covered’ by the prefects. They even turn some events into house competitions, a role supposedly given to the house leaders. This broad remit, whilst allowing the prefects freedom, limits the options for non prefects to get involved. In identifying the strengths of a collegial

approach to leadership Yukl (1998) states “shared leadership not only involves leadership behaviours that build willing followers who commit themselves to the organization’s objectives, but it also empowers followers to accomplish these objectives by their becoming leaders in their own fields of expertise” (p.324) Surely empowerment of followers rather than disempowerment is in the school’s best interest.

5.3.4 Coaching, support and student development

Another tension was the level of ongoing teacher support. The case study school is very conscious of facilitating genuine leadership opportunities for student leaders. This is clear from the teacher in charge of student leaders, who used the metaphor of sitting at the back of the bus, going along with the student leaders rather than driving them. She was of the belief that by leaving the students to lead themselves they were getting the most out of the experience, “how will they learn and develop their leadership skills and knowledge if I step in all the time.

Sometimes things will fail due to lack of organisation or drive, it’s very frustrating for me and them, but that’s leadership, you get back what you put in” (teacher 1). The interviewees reflected this aim, “[teacher] gives us the bottom line, we choose where and how far to take it” (prefect 4). Whilst this view allows the students to experience genuine leadership, it can be argued that it does little to develop them as leaders. It must be noted at this point, that *all* the student leaders interviewed, held the prefect support teacher in very high regard. None of the students had any criticism of the teacher and the following discussion reflects more on the structure of support in place rather than any lack of support from this teacher.

During the interviews many of the students expressed disappointment at their perceived lack of impact as leaders. “We [the prefect group] had such big aspirations at the start of the year”

(prefect 7). "If we had more guidance and support from staff we would have had to get on actioning our ideas" (prefect 1). The idea of increased staff input was a common comment amongst the student leaders. "Even if the teacher just gave us deadlines" (prefect 2). Sitting at the back of the bus does not allow the teacher to give much input to the group. A more learning centred approach would be the teacher being the driving instructor, sitting alongside the prefects who are driving the bus, providing feedback and direction when it is needed. Andrews & Keeffe (2011) concluded that "students seek structure and guidance from teachers and from the school ... they seek to learn [leadership] skills so they can be empowered to function effectively, as leaders of their own social destinies" (p.33). Feedback and reflection is encouraged by both Dewey (1944) and Hattie (2009). They stress the importance of reflection within the experimental education paradigm. Dewey (1944) states "the deliberate cultivation of this stage of thought [reflection] constitutes thinking as a distinctive experience. Thinking in other words is the intentional endeavor to discover specific connections between something which we do and the consequences which result, so that the two become continuous" (p.145). With the current structure of student leadership at the case study school there is a distinct lack of thinking about the connection between actions and consequence. Hattie relates feedback to the task being completed "the greater the challenge the higher the probability that one seeks and needs feedback, and the more important it is that there is a teacher to ensure that the learner is on the right path to successfully meet the challenge" (p.38). Leadership for school students is certainly a challenge. It is one from which tremendous learning can come but for this to happen the support and time for reflection must be in place. Gordon (1994) promotes the role of the teacher working with the student leaders as that of helping forge a family. She states "the teacher's role is not to tell them what to do, but to help them do what they have decided to do, to chase those who do not do their jobs, and to smooth over disagreements and frictions

when they arise” (p.45). This concept of the teacher as a maternal figure fits well with how I see both parenting and teaching. Allowing the student leaders to express themselves and follow their own path whilst questioning and refocusing them if they are heading towards trouble. Getting this balance right is difficult. Lavery (2006) offers an explicit warning that the school should keep in mind, he states “do not leave the students unsupported. If there is one reason that student leadership fails, it is due largely to a lack of staff backing” (p.28). The task of mentoring, guiding or being parent to the student leaders is evidently bigger than one person. Hine (2013) & Leo (2006) call for all staff to be directly responsible for student leadership development. It is the ideology underpinning the school’s leadership structure that engages, or disengages, staff from involvement in the leadership programme. Lavery & Hine (2012) suggest that the responsibility for staff involvement starts with the principal. This view is supported by Leo (2006) who describes an approach undertaken in his school where the principal involved a significant number of staff in the redevelopment of the student leadership structure. These staff work collaboratively together with the student leaders to explore the school’s philosophy of leadership. The outcome of this review was an increase in the size of the leadership cohort, the principal therefore chose to allocate more staff to work with the leaders resulting in “better relationships between staff and students at the leadership level” (Leo, 2006, p.27).

The learning cycle identified by Kolb in 1984 and discussed in the literature review, highlights the importance of reflection / review and conceptualisation phases. Without teacher input to guide students through these two phases it is doubtful whether it would happen.

The lack of feedback was raised by three interviewees. As discussed previously feedback is an essential part of learning, “specific, descriptive feedback is necessary for improvement and success” Te Kete Ipurangi website (2017). The case study school appears to work on the

assumption that student leaders are selected because they already have the necessary leadership skills. They are given expectations around their conduct and are made aware of their influence as role models but, as the principal commented, “part of leadership experience is us training them. We sometimes leave them in the lurch a bit. We say you’ve got the skill-set now go and use it” (Principal). The student perspective reiterates this thought. “We don’t get told if we are doing a good job so it’s hard to know if we are leaving our mark” (prefect 8). The power of feedback was brought home when a student commented “one boy said to me that I had been the best house leader he had ever had in his time at the school. This made me feel good. We generally don’t get much feedback so comments like this are nice” (non prefect 2).

From the above discussions it is clear that student leaders need a clear vision, explicit expectations and plenty of formative feedback along their leadership development journey. It is imperative that a school views student leadership through a learning lense rather than as a job for students to complete. The ideology, structure and staff involvement behind the student leadership programme all combine to dictate its effectiveness. Although distributed leadership allows many people within a school to contribute to the organisations direction it is clear from the above discussion that the principal’s support for authentic student leadership is a necessity. It is the principal who through words and actions, can focus the school community onto student leadership development.

Chapter 6: Implications

In this section of the study the implications, drawn from the previous chapters' discussions, will be stated. The author will then propose a model for student leadership. As this study was based on one case study school the model is specific to that school, however, the findings of this study have generally echoed other studies into student leadership. Certainly, this is not the first study to suggest increasing opportunity for students to experience leadership. The underlying principle of the model is a distributed leadership approach to structuring student leadership opportunities. Although it was created specifically with the case study school in mind, the ideology and general structure could apply to other schools.

These are the major implications that have emerged from this study for student leadership in the case study school.

6.1 Widen Opportunity

Leadership experiences are beneficial to students and the school. Every study viewed in the research for this investigation concluded that student leadership was a worthy pursuit for schools. There are few arguments against student leadership programmes in schools. I would argue that all of the issues can be overcome with structural or ideological adaptations. Tradition plays a strong role in student leadership; unfortunately it is this strength that can also limit the development of leadership programmes to reflect contemporary society.

Whilst opportunities should be offered to all senior students not all students may want to be a school leader. There are many other avenues for leadership in the lives of adolescents. Some,

as with two of the interviewees in this study, may choose to focus just on their studies and explore their leadership skills outside of school.

However, the culture of the school should still expect and provide opportunity for these students to be involved in their school. In the words of the teacher in charge of prefects “there are a whole lot of talented students who come to school, do what they have to, then go home without leaving a mark on their school” (teacher 1).

It can be argued that there is an ethical obligation, as well as a curriculum requirement, on the school to provide opportunities for all senior students to experience authentic leadership. If a medical procedure is proven to help people or a reading programme accelerates learning then equality of opportunity should allow for those things to be available to everyone who needs it. A school would never offer maths to just the top 8 students in the school while sport is generally open to all with different grade teams to provide opportunity for student development. All these vehicles of student growth need to be available to all students. The same is therefore true of leadership development. Leo (2006) in reviewing the traditional structure of leadership at his school identified “fewer than 15% of our students could be said to have been exposed to leadership practice at any real level”. He adds “there are a significant cohort who were not appointed as leaders but who demonstrate during their final year that they would have been a good choice” (p.24).

Like many schools, the case study school faces a situation each year where some very capable leaders remain unused, undeveloped and unrecognised. In the words of one student interviewee, “having the badge has given me the jurisdiction to step in - I have more of an obligation to try and sort things out” (prefect 2). There is an argument that increasing the number of student leaders will devalue the position. I believe this would be true if a school decides to increase the number of student leaders without addressing the ideology and culture

around leadership within the school. It is necessary to ensure that the school community understands the concept of student leadership and empowerment and that there are the support networks in place prior to any increase in student leadership opportunities.

6.2 Develop a vision

A school needs to develop a clear vision, including a definition of student leadership. This vision should be conceived through student and staff discourse, and connect with the whole school vision and Kawa [case study school set of values]. Having a clear, shared vision provides the basis for all student leadership activities.

Andrew & Keeffe (2011) state “when personal and organisational leadership beliefs and practices converge it is more likely that leadership notions within the school will be replicated” (p.24). As the school is the major influencer on student understanding of leadership, matching its leadership structures to its values should not be an overwhelming task.

6.3 Realign the structure

The student leadership structure should change from a hierarchical to a distributed system.

“Students can believe that there is a ‘hierarchy of leadership’ with some leadership roles perceived as being of higher value than others. It is important to give a profile for all leadership positions so that librarians and music monitors are seen to be just as much valued as prefects and premier team sports captains” (Anderson 2016, p.22). Empowerment or disempowerment, in the case of this study, is a fundamental component in promoting student leadership.

Neigel (2006) sums this point up succinctly. “Educators must begin to invest in their students and empower them to be participants in a shared, collective endeavor: their education. Only then will educators be truly able to model participatory democracy in their schools and help prepare students for life as informed, engaged citizens” (p.24). Locating student leadership within the distributed leadership structure of the school gives it a real place from which to influence decision making.

Leading as part of a team has been repeatedly voiced in this study and others as the preferred option for high school students (Davis 2011; Dempster & Lazzio 2007; Hine 2013). Sharing the decision making, supporting each other and having the option to take on strength or interest based roles were all identified as reasons. As reported by Komives et al. (2006) and reflected in this study, student leaders struggle to lead their peers. Having the whole cohort explicitly identified as leaders would go a significant way to reducing this tension. If the majority of a student leader’s peers were also in some form of leadership role, then there would be a greater understanding of the nature of the responsibility. “Empathy is the experience of understanding another person's condition from their perspective. You place yourself in their shoes and feel what they are feeling. Empathy is known to increase prosocial (helping) behaviours” (“All about empathy” 2017). One student posed a challenge during their interview, “I would love to find a way to remove the tension at the start of the year when the prefects are selected” (prefect 7). A distributed inclusive model goes some way to addressing this issue.

6.4 Build the team

Year 13 students need to perceive themselves as a leadership *team*, all working towards achieving a common goal. Lavery (2006) identified a sense of empowerment, responsibility and respect for other students as an outcome of collaboration. In one interview a student made the comment about being given the “authority to act” when he was given the prefect badge. The school’s aim should be to empower all year 13 students with the authority to act. Roach et al. (1999) stated the need for students to be trained to work as a leadership team rather than assuming they have these skills. Gordon (1994) identified a process to enable collaborative leadership, build the group, chose a task, identify the steps to achieving the task, and develop a sense of group empowerment. The challenge for the model proposed below is to ensure that this process is followed within each committee. Just grouping students together based on a shared interest will not be enough to get them working effectively as a team. Effective training through the leadership camp at the start of the year, will potentially arm the year 13 students with the skills to build their group, both at the individual committee level and as a year cohort.

6.5 Recognition

Recognition of student leaders should be on the basis of their achievements in the role rather than a popularity contest. As well as students recognising their power and influence as leaders, the students themselves need external recognition for effective leadership. Although leadership in a school should be altruistic, recognition is part of feedback. Recognition promotes the leaders to the school community and serves as an aspirational tool for younger students. Many schools have written criteria (Leo 2006) from which to formally recognise leadership service.

The broad nature of leadership as discussed earlier, means that criteria would need to be extremely generic in nature. Leo (2006), in restructuring student leadership at an Australian school, identified “what is needed is recognition that genuinely enhanced the role of successful student leaders but did not diminish the role of others already in it” (p.26). The Australian school reviewed each student’s leadership activity towards the end of the third term, (¾ of the way through the year), and awarded those who had made significant impact an Excellence in Leadership award. Other students could achieve gold or silver honours in leadership. This model rewards those who put in the effort throughout the year and potentially stops the drop off in commitment identified in term 3.

Recognition also comes in through the language used. Holdsworth (2013) stated, “there are new perspectives and practices in the roles that students take in school leadership. Note that this deliberately changes the language too, recognising that we are now talking about students as part of the distributed leadership of their schools and community” (p.26).

As identified earlier, there is a shift needed in staff attitudes and understanding of student leadership. Starting with the definition and developing a whole school shared vision, should increase the importance of student leadership for the school and thus give those involved recognition.

6.6 Increase staff involvement

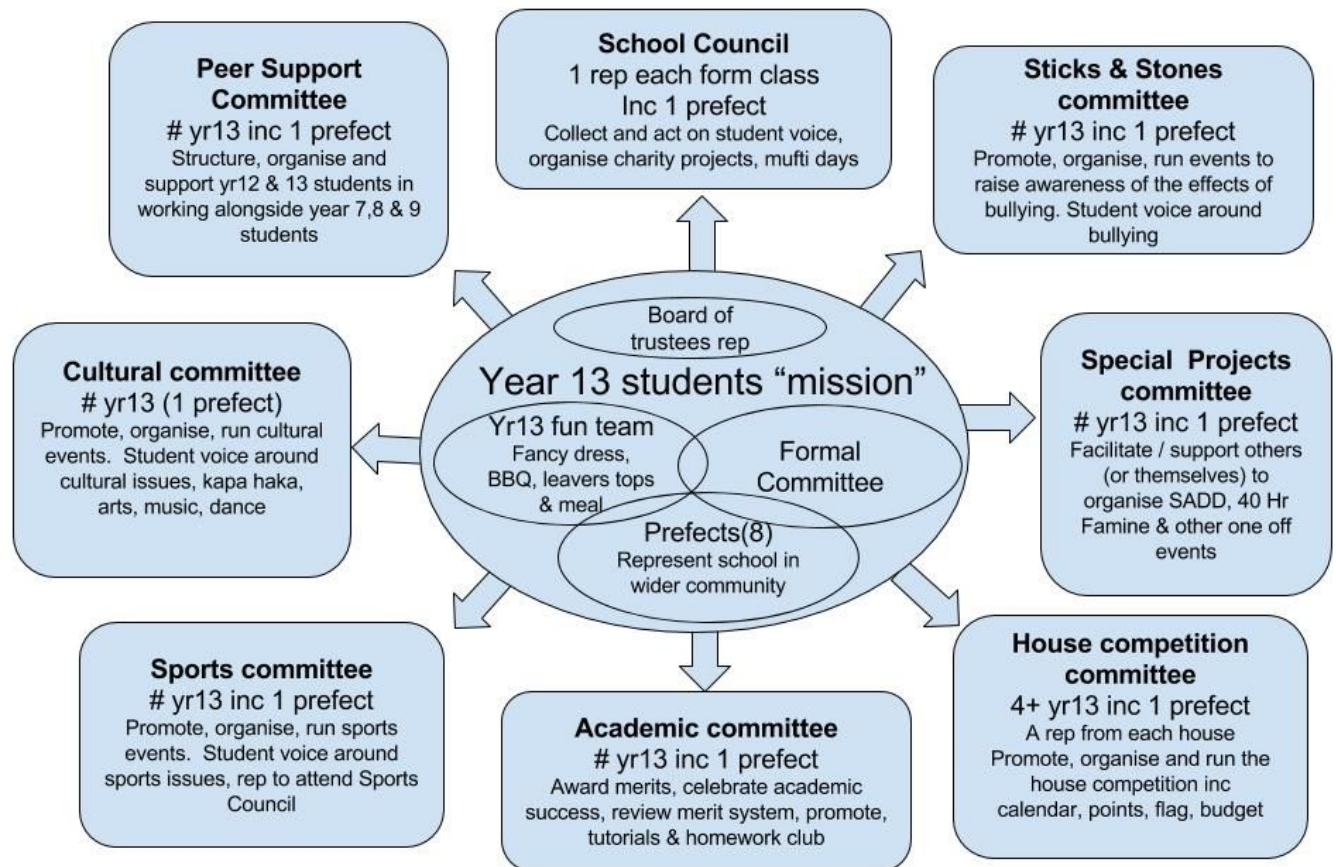
This study proposes Increased staff involvement in ongoing support throughout the year, providing feedback and guidance for the development of the student’s leadership capacity.

Hine (2013) calls for “all staff members to become directly responsible for student leadership development initiatives, and fully committed to these efforts in the spirit of collaboration with other staff members and parents” (p.35). He discusses the need for teacher professional development around leadership suggesting that teachers become reflective of their own leadership when given this training. The current structure of the case study schools student leadership has very limited staff involvement. The focus on allowing the students freedom to lead has been discussed earlier. As well as arguably limiting the leaders development through a lack of feedback, the staff are not aware of what the student leadership group are doing. Simply communicating with the whole staff about the initiatives and ideas the prefects are working on will increase staff involvement. The model proposed by the author has, by design, a broad range of staff involved. The idea of students recruiting interested staff through pitching their ideas at a full staff meeting, immediately addresses the concerns over communication. In her study of what constitutes effective training, Davis (2011) concluded that school based programmes, involving the school’s staff and interestingly, former prefects, was the most effective for student growth. This implication throws up the challenge of staff workload. Asking teachers, some of whom already feel overworked, to commit to student committee meetings could result in negativity towards the programme. It is important therefore to find a small incentive such as reduced ‘duty time’ to balance the increase in time commitment.

6.6 The author's model

From these implications the following model was devised by this study's author.

Hodkinson's (2017) model of student leadership



- Yr13 decide on **their** mission (school improvement project) and all lead through actions - it's the theme for the year at all events
- Each committee meets minimum 1x per term, runs 2 events per year (including 1 house competition event)
- Prefect group meets 1x per week to ensure communication / support across committees - coordinate newsletter article etc
- All student leaders meet 1x per term to report back on their progress (NO limit on SL number in each committee)
- Student leaders awarded badge to recognise their involvement and commitment to leadership in the school

The above model attempts to incorporate the implications derived from this research. The model works on the understanding that leadership is *influencing other people in an ethical and socially responsible way through words, deeds and attitudes*.

The key paradigm underpinning the model, is open opportunity for all year 13 students to experience an authentic leadership role. It is purposefully centred on the year 13 cohort of students, as these are the students who generally have the most influence due to their age, experience and hopefully maturity level. Within the central circle on the model, the reader will notice that there are still prefects. Removing these positions was considered as the report finds that appointing prefects had a disempowering effect on the rest of the cohort. But the position is retained due in part, to the need for students to represent the school at community events. Within this structure the prefect group's focus is on engagement with the wider community, rather than its current remit. Examples of the prefects' revised role could be primary school & old people visits, community ANZAC celebrations and parent meetings whilst still running the school's formal assemblies each week.

The model is based on a distributed leadership system, as practiced by the adult leadership structure of the school. non prefect s, at their start of year leadership camp, create the theme or their "mission" for the year. This mission is an attempt to provide the year 13 students with a measurable way of making an impact, leaving their mark, on their school. With facilitation from the year 13 form teachers the students will identify an issue within the school that they believe needs to be addressed. Examples of this may include participation in school events, language used by students around school or increasing school pride. The mission will be the overarching theme by which all committees and their activities are driven. All year 13 students will have an equal stake and share in the mission and an agreed 'measure of success' will be determined during the leadership camp.

All year 13 students will have the opportunity to select a committee in which they have interest. They will then by default be the leaders of that committee. All year 13 students will be trained in running a committee and they will be facilitators within the group. Some committees will allow younger students to engage in student leadership. The Sports, Cultural, Academic, Sticks and Stones and School Council all have need for representation from all ages within the school. It will be the year 13 students in consultation with their staff support who decide on the structure of their committee.

After the leadership camp, a representative from each committee will present a brief outline of their ideas at a full staff meeting. As well as communicating the year 13 mission, this meeting will allow staff to opt into one of the committees as a support person. The staff member's role will be that of coach; they will not interfere in the running of meetings or in decisions being made but will offer feedback and guidance on a regular basis to the leaders. Staff will be briefed on the leadership model and it's aims prior to this meeting and staff with relevant skills will be shoulder tapped to request they consider offering their support at the student & staff meeting. The whole leadership team (all year 13's who opted in and staff involved) will meet twice during the year to review progress on their mission.

Once operative each committee will acquire its personnel and meet at least termly to take action in its field of concern. The prefect representative on each committee will report back to the prefect group meetings to ensure coordination and communication between committees is maintained. The goal of each committee will be to organise and run at least two events throughout the year, listen to student voice, address issues and celebrate student success in

their area. Where possible events can be linked to the house competition through communication with the House competition committee.

All year 13 students have the opportunity to be recognised as a student leader. In following Leo's (2006) structure, discussed previously, awarding student leader badges at the end of term 1 to those who have committed to their role would seem fair. At the end of the year, 'Excellence in Leadership' awards will also be given to the few students who have excelled in their role. The staff involved in the committees, along with the student leaders themselves, will decide on these awards. A criteria may be needed for this.

In summary the model of student leadership outlined above provides a clear structure from which to address the implications of this study. The model answers the key research question, how can the benefits of student leadership be offered to all senior students? The study has justified, through identifying the benefits of student leadership, the idea of leadership opportunity for all year 13 students. It has demonstrated the value of student leadership in schools and has proposed an alternative way of viewing student leadership. This change in ideology and structure should facilitate more effective student leadership for both the school and individual students.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

7.1 Limitations of the study

It is fully accepted that this naturalistic investigation into student leadership at one case study school is limited in its scope. It was the author's intention to go deep rather than wide. The rich flavour that Guba & Lincoln (1981) talk about in relation to naturalistic enquiry was certainly true in this study. The number of students' and staff interviewed was relatively small but exploring, in detail, the students' perceptions of their leadership role, as they lived it, was an eye opening experience. This study did not aim to be generalisable. In talking about naturalistic enquiry Guba & Lincoln (1981) state "its purpose is to maximize information not facilitate generalisation" (p.202). They also state that "the object of the game is not to focus on the similarities that can be developed into generalizations but to detail the many specifics that give the context its unique flavour" (p.201). The research provided a clear direction for student leadership in modern schools. The proposed student leadership model was born from the need to action the implications for the case study school. The model is however transferable, other schools can readily apply the basic structure to their leadership programmes, adapting the various groups and committees to their school's operation.

A further limitation is the time period that the study was undertaken within. The researcher was only able to study one year cohort in their time as student leaders. Repeating the process over a few years would consolidate the findings and remove any particular bias the current prefect group may have had. However, using both previous studies and my own experience working with many previous prefect groups from three different schools, has allowed me to compare the case study school with others. This group of prefects was in my experience reflective of most

other student leadership teams. Studying the student leaders at other schools could also have been an interesting comparison, although this would add in many more variables and complications to the study.

7.2 Suggestions for further research

7.2.1 Follow up research

It is the intent of this author to apply the recommended model for student leadership on his return to teaching next year. Trialling the model will produce many challenges, the obvious being management of the dramatically increased number of opportunities and people involved. This said, the structure of the leadership model should mean that the prefects maintain an overview and a type of management group for issues to be addressed. It will be interesting to reflect in a few years time on the success or otherwise of the changes proposed.

7.2.2 Student leadership structure

Most authors on student leadership agree that the traditional model is now outdated. McNae (2011) states “I believe schools have an obligation to critique the traditional leadership structures that are presented to students” (p.48). It would be interesting to study schools that have changed their structure to a more inclusive ideology, and to investigate how much influence student leadership can achieve.

When considering the future potential of student leadership in schools Holdsworth (2013) stated “student discussions often start cautiously, with limited perceptions of student roles, but such discussions have rapidly moved to talk about what students see as their core interests in schools:

- teacher student relationships
- Learning and teaching styles
- Resourcing of education
- The curriculum
- Student input on teacher selection
- Student led teacher professional development
- Student representation on school decision making bodies” (Holdsworth, 2013, p.26)

7.2.3 Leadership & responsibility

This study highlighted how some students improved their attitude and behaviour once elected as leaders. Research into the effects of giving leadership and responsibility to disaffected students could enhance our ability as educators to engage these students.

7.2.4 Training and support

The training and support that student leaders need is another area that would benefit from research. Davis (2011) investigated the effectiveness of student leadership training programmes, finding that it is the environment that the school facilitates for the leaders informal

development that is the most valued. There are formal opportunities for schools to send their student leaders on, such as GRIP leadership (<http://gripleadership.co.nz/>) however there are few professional development opportunities for staff who are supporting these students.

Research into how best to equip these staff would benefit student leadership across a school.

7.3 Concluding Comments

On a warm and sunny day in early November I arrived at the case study school, notebook in hand, for one last observation. It was a kind of full circle. There was to be a special assembly. As the whole school meandered into the auditorium, I stood with the current prefects, a group with whom I had become attached. I felt emotion somewhere deep within me - naturalistic research will do that to you. I had interviewed and observed these 8 students throughout the year, but I had not realised how close I had become. As we spoke, laughing at the memories from their very first, nervous assembly, I could hear their voices from my interviews. The very different perceptions they had about leadership, the varying degree to which they thought they were succeeding, and the challenges of studies, friends and expectations. They were relaxed, about to pass on the badge of responsibility.

In we went, the principal explained to the school about the importance of our student leaders, how we should all support them, be good 'followers', the word just doesn't seem right anymore. I look around the audience, covertly trying to catch a glimpse of the hopefuls. I had goosebumps. Part of me wanted to stand up and shout - stop, this is all wrong, I wanted everyone to understand the potential disempowerment we were about to inflict. Names were read out. The other part of me was proud. These were students that I had taught, coached,

laughed with. I'd seen many develop from year 7, they started the school when I did. We have a bond. Up onto the stage they went, looking rather awkward. They all deserved to be there, but then so did others, many others. Handshakes, applause. The now former prefects read out a quote each, something to inspire us all with. Then 'school stand', and it was all over.

Outside the school went back to its business, back to class. The year 12's hung around, plenty of back slapping and handshakes. Brave faces concealing intense joy or sadness. Some sloped off, jumping into cars to go and celebrate, or commiserate, with friends over a coffee. I understood. I felt for them all. The school had just promoted these eight students above all others. These chosen few were now, in everyone's eyes, "*the* students leaders".

The other 58, well this year they are lucky (although some may not agree with me). There's a plan, a new model on which the school is going to structure its student leadership. I take a deep breath, a different emotion takes over.

During the past year I've harped on to anybody who would listen about the inequality of student leadership. It's time to actually do something about it. I feel challenged, I feel alone, does anyone want to collaborate on this one?

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Appendices

Appendix A

Information Sheet



School of Educational Studies and Leadership

Email: stevehodkinson@gmail.com

Leadership for All - Information Sheet for interviewees

My name is Steve Hodkinson, I am working towards achieving my Masters in Education. As part of my course I am conducting a research project investigating Student Leadership in Schools. As a current, or former prefect of your school, I am very interested to hear about your experiences. I would therefore like to interview you to learn about your experiences.

If you choose to take part in this study, your involvement in this project will be as an interviewee. I will meet with you at your school (or via skype) and we will discuss your experiences as a student leader. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes and I will be recording the conversation. I will then use your responses, along with others, to analyse the benefits and issues around student leadership in schools.

Participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the project at any time without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, I will use my best endeavours to remove any of the information

relating to you from the project, including any final publication, provided that this remains practically achievable.

The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: your identity will not be made public without your prior consent. To ensure anonymity, I will be using *student #* rather than your name. Only my supervisor at the University of Canterbury and myself will have access to your responses. I will keep the recording of the interview on my device as a password protected file until I have written up the interview then I will delete the file. A thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library. Please indicate to the researcher on the consent form if you would like a copy of the summary of results of the project.

The project is being carried out as a requirement of the Masters in Education by Steve Hodkinson under the supervision of Billy O'Steen, who can be contacted at billy.osteen@canterbury.ac.nz. He will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human

Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (humanethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

If you agree to participate in the study, you are asked to complete the consent form and return via email to stevehodkinson@gmail.com or to Steve Hodkinson, PO Box 308, Cromwell 9310

If you are under 18 years old or are still enrolled at a school please ensure that your parent / caregiver reads and gives consent for you to be involved by also signing the consent form.

Yours sincerely

Steve Hodkinson

Appendix B

School of Educational Studies and Leadership

Email: stevehodkinson@gmail.com

30/6/17



Leadership for All - Consent Form

☐ I have been given a full explanation of this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐ I understand what is required of me if I agree to take part in the research.

☐ I understand that participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without penalty.

Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information I have provided should this remain practically achievable.

☐ I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be confidential and that any published or reported results will not identify the participants. I understand that a thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.

☐ I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in password protected electronic form and will be destroyed after it has been transcribed.

☐ I understand the risks associated with taking part and how they will be managed.

☐ I understand that I am able to receive a report on the findings of the study by contacting the researcher at the conclusion of the project.

☐ I understand that I can contact the researcher Steve Hodgkinson, stevhodkinson@gmail.com or supervisor Billy O'Steen, billy.osteen@canterbury.ac.nz for further information. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)

☐ I would like a summary of the results of the project

☐ By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Print Name _____ Signed: _____ Date _____

Email address: _____

If under 18 years old or still enrolled at school please ask parent guardian to sign below

☐ I, as parent / caregiver for _____ give my consent for them to be involved in this study.

Parent / Caregiver Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix C

Yr 13 Current & former Prefect Interview Questions

Small talk - *what year, who with, do you remember your team of prefects*, did you expect to get the role, did you really want the role, what do you remember / highlights

Expectations before starting the role? Why do students strive to be head b/g or prefect?

What is the reality of your role?

What did you gain, learn, develop as a person?

What challenges / issues are there?

Was there enough support? At the start, during the year?

Were you nervous about running assembly, how is public speaking?

Do you feel you are genuinely leading or just a figurehead?

Do you feel like you are making a difference or just keeping things the same?

Has it helped you in further life? How, examples

What else could be done to improve the experience

Appendix D

Yr13 Non prefect interview questions

Purpose of interview - study looking at how students take leadership within schools, what they do, their experiences of it. As yr13 you are top of the tree so in a natural position of influence (leadership)

What leadership (formal or informal) have you've done? May need to explain definition of leadership

What did you gain, learn, develop as a person

What challenges / issues are there

Was there enough support? At the start, during the year?

What are barriers to you taking a more active role in leadership in the school?

How do you view the prefect role?

Has relationship with prefect friends changed? Did they change?

Do you think having a team of prefects is the best way ? What alternatives?

Do you feel like you are making a difference or just keeping things the same?

What else could be done to improve the experience

Appendix E

Principal Interview Questions

How do you see the students leaders, particularly prefects role in the school currently?

Is this too wide a role?

Seems to be gap between expectation and reality, HB & HG mostly just role modelling

What is your role with them?

What style of leadership do you provide?

Are student leaders expected to operate in this style?

What are the benefits of student leadership to the school?

What are the challenges / issues / weaknesses with student leadership in our school?

Do you think the non formal leadership role is taken on enough by yr13 students?

Would you like to see more students involved in leading? Do we need more activities, events?

How would you like to see student leadership be developed within the school?

Staff input & support is a debatable issue in leadership - what would your opinion be on sharing around more faculties?

